'I'M NOT STUPID'

GARCI: YES, I TALKED WITH GMA

Biazon says young officers mad, planning mass leave

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Jhannex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

ALLEGATIONS that some generals meddled in the 2004 elections have prompted a group of young, idealistic officers to consider taking a mass leave or resigning from the military,

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

By Michael Lim Ubac

AFTER more than two weeks in hiding, Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano broke his silence on the wiretapping controversy last night and denied in an exclusive telephone interview with the Inquirer he conspired with President Macapagal-Arroyo to rig last year's balloting.

Garcillano also said he talked to a number of candidates in the last election. They include vice presidential candidate Loren

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THE "SOURCE" • topic, as called by lawyer Alan Paguia at the House of Representatives.

DOUBLE EXPOSURE: Mirror reflects President Arroyo making something in order as she makes her way to yet another meeting at the Palace on Tuesday

Cory, Rosales seek meeting with Noli

Enrile admits he also talked to poll execs

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IN THE midst of suggestions that it was not just President Macapagal-Arroyo who talked to election officials during the 2004 balloting, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile yesterday admitted he had done the same thing but did not think it was improper.

In the House, members of the committee jointly investigating the wiretapping controversy engaged in a lengthy debate before playing a three-hour long version of the recording presented by Alan Paguia, former lawyer of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

On Thursday a 30-minute edited version of Reginio's "session" tapes was played in

Are 'kingmakers' sizing up Vice President?

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Lim Ubac

ARE THE "kingmakers" looking over Vice President Noli de Castro to check if he has "what it takes to lead this country?"

Former President Corazon C. Aquino and Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales sought a meeting with Vice President Noli de Castro yesterday supposedly to assess the crisis-hounding Presidency Macapagal-Arroyo, a highly reliable source told the Inquirer.

But De Castro reportedly postponed the meeting as he had to leave for Hong Kong with his family to celebrate his son's birthday today.

He has agreed to meet Aquino and Rosales tomorrow at an undisclosed place, the source told the Inquirer.

The source hinted that Rosales, the successor of the late Jaime Cardinal Sin and Aquino, a key player in Edsa I and Edsa II, sought out the Vice President to discuss the growing clamor for the President's resignation over allegations of electoral fraud, and possibly, the "issue of succession."

De Castro is the President's constitutional successor. But the former TV broadcaster's capacity to perform the functions of a president and run the country, in case Ms Arroyo resigns, has been questioned by not a few sectors, especially members of the political opposition.

Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran said that De Castro also benefited from the widespread fraud allegedly perpetrated by the President in the May 2004 elections.

Beltran believes "the line of constitutional succession does not cover Mr. De Castro for this reason. Beyond this technical barrier, however, the issue is possibly much bad Mr. De Castro does not have what it takes to lead this country."

GMA welcomes impeachment to rebut charges

By Christine O. Avendaño and Philip C. Tubeza

BRUSSELS—

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she would welcome impeachment so she could refute allegations that she rigged election results.

Ms Arroyo, fighting for survival amid a crisis that has roiled the financial markets, sparked severe protests and triggered fears of military intervention, said through her press secretary she wanted the nation to calm down.

"Hopefully this move [impeachment] will quiet down the political environment," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said the impeachment was unrelated to and would not be a waste of time.

"But if this move is the only way to put a stop to the prevailing political grandstanding and mud slinging, then we welcome the move of Speaker [Jose] De Venecia if only to establish the proper constitutional venue," he said.

De Venecia has said he will ask the Justice committee in the House of Representatives to tackle in an impeachment complaint filed against Ms Arroyo late last month for breach of public trust.

The complaint was filed by lawyer Oliver Lozano who charged Ms Arroyo with betrayal of public trust following her wiretapped conversation with an election official at the height of the canvassing of votes. It was endorsed by Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales.

Another impeachment complaint was filed against Ms Arroyo in the House of Representatives, and again, an administration lawmaker endorsed it.

Lawyer Rexlon Lazaro on Monday filed the second impeachment complaint against the President for betrayal of public trust. It was endorsed on the

Nerve twits Joker: He's like a bat

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. Juan Ponce Enrile's ranting of the opposition to the impeachment proceedings over the "Ultragate" controversy has turned into a cartoon showdown.

Breaking his silence on the wiretap, Enrile had stated last week's announcement by the National Bureau of Investigation that it would not investigate the controversial Hello Garci tape.

Instead, Enrile said the opposition should have the fear of launching an impeachment trial, pointing out

3 RP-based groups win int'l awards

By Christine Cayton

THREE Philippine-based conservation groups whose efforts include saving the endangered Philippine crocodile, the Philippine hawk-eagle and ensuring the 29 winners in the recently held 2005 IUCN Conservation Programme (IUCP).

The highest grant fund of $75,000 at the Conservation Award was awarded to each of three teams: The CROC Project in the Philippines for its work with the critically endangered Philippine crocodile (Crocodylus mindorensis); the Black-faver Project in Argentina; and the Mono 2000 Project which is working to promote sustain-

PHILIPPINE CROCODILE, world's most severely endangered crocodile.

CALAMIAN BAB., rare flightless, bird species.

MONITOR LIZARD (kayumanggi), endemic to Polillo Island.

UST calls for 'truth commission'

By Nicole Pepa and Christian V. Esguerra

THE UNIVERSITY of Sto. Tomas, the country's oldest university, is not about to demand President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation, at least for now.

UST instead wants a "truth commission" to investigate allegations that Ms Arroyo tried to rig the 2004 presidential election as opposition has been upset over revelations with an election official, and to punish those who would be found guilty.

While UST bides its time, calls for the resignation of Ms Arroyo in the wake of the "Ultragate" scandal are ringing in other schools.

The University of the Philippines Diliman has joined the protest for Ms Arroyo to step down and let the people to explore political options

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2005

SC advances VAT hearing

But TRO vs tax law stays

By Armando N. Nocum, Ma. C. Cabacungan and TJ Burgonio

THE SUPREME Court yesterday moved to speed up the resolution of its decision to throw the extended value-added tax amid businessmen's cost-inefficiency concerns about the devastating impact of delayed EVAT implementation on the country's international credit standing and its economy.

The SC did not lift its order freezing the law even after its implementation last Friday but said it was resetting the oral arguments on the merits of the petitions against the EVAT from July 26 to July 14.

"That means the TRO remains and continues to be in effect," said lawyer Ismael Khan, chief of the SC public information office.

Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo, in a motion on behalf of respondents Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Finance Secretary Cesar V. Purisima and Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr., on Monday sought the immediate lifting of the freeze order, saying it was costing the country P130 million in losses for each day that the EVAT was not collected.

The motion also asked the SC to require the petitioners, led by Alejandro Y. Republic Act 9337, or the EVAT law, to post the bond recommended by the duly issues.

'Expediting' the process

Khan said the decision meant the high court wanted to "expedite" the process and it came out without undue decision on the issue.

"Because of the national importance of the case, the court moved the oral arguments to an earlier date," he said.

In its six-hour resolution yesterday, the SC also ordered the petitioners to comment on the government's motion within three days.

According to Khan, it will take the SC from 30 to 24 days after the conclusion of arguments before it comes out with a decision on the motion to lift the TRO or a ruling on the main petitions to nullify the law that oppose tax legislators, transport groups and petroleum dealers association filed.

Before the court went to require further arguments or memorandums from either parties, Khan said in a telephone interview.

Businessmen yesterday urged the Supreme Court to allow the EVAT to be implemented on a collection basis, while insisting the provisions that the petitioners claimed were unconstitutional, mainly the provision giving the President "unguided authority" to increase the VAT rate to 12 percent.

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce, said that while the SC was hearing arguments on the issue, the government could proceed with the rest of the EVAT, specifically the collection of VAT on electricity and other value that was being exempted on to generate the revenues needed to cut the budget deficit.

"The sharp fall in the peso and stock markets indicate how devastating the impact of the delayed EVAT on the economy was. Investors are looking to the EVAT to solve most of our fiscal problems," Chua said.

Legislators from both chambers of congress, and from both administration and opposition camps, yesterday urged the SC to resolve the EVAT case quickly to free "injustice" to the nation.

Price plunge

"The plunge of the peso and stock market indicate that the uncertainty over the VAT law is not good for the economy," said Senate President Franklin Drilon.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said the SC should not have stopped the application of the law but should have issued the injunction only when the President was about to exercise her steadily power to raise the VAT rate.

"Can we stop the clock? Can we stop the device on the finances of government? Can we stop the salaries of members of the Supreme Court? And the salaries of every clerk and janitor in the government? Can we stop the expenditure of public funds? Can we stop government?" he asked.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña said the SC's delay in order was giving the country a bad image abroad.

"It's not only uncertainty per se but it is also this impression that we have been running that we do not know what the law will be because because what you passed today could be changed tomorrow either by the same Congress or by the courts," he said.

House Representative Alfredo Lim, and Eduardo Ermita, said each day of delay in the lifting of the TRO was "a new, devastating death for the economy."

CHEERS
President Macapagal-Arroyo cheers on three-up 4-year-old Princess Quilana Jedi Li and 6-year-old Angela Llamera, cancer patients who are undergoing chemotherapy treatment at the Philippine General Hospital. The President visited the pediatric cancer ward of the PGH yesterday.

Sandigan resets Garcia's arraignment

By Nelson S. Flores

THE SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday reset the scheduled arraignment of retired armed forces comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia who is facing trial in connection plunder charges filed against him and his family.

The antigraft court's Second Division presided by Justice Edilberto Sandoval ordered the postponement since Garcia's motion to quash the indictment was not yet resolved.

The new arraignment date has been reset to July 26.

The Ombudsman charged Garcia, his wife Cleofe and sons Jan Cell, Juan Paulo and Timothy Mark with plunder, an offense punishable with death, after government prosecutors accused them of illegally amassing wealth amounting to at least P303.2 million.

Garcia is currently detained at the Philippine National Police Headquarters in Camp Crame while his wife and three sons remain free.

According to Sandoval and the clerk of the Second Division—Justices Francisco Villaruz and Rodolfo Ponferrada—Garcia and his sons could only be held in seven cells but not in penthouses.

The justices explained that the resolution submitted by the Ombudsman shows that Garcia and his sons were only "beneficiaries" but not among those who helped Garcia acquired the illegal wealth.

Meanwhile, acting graduate of the Philippine Military Academy would be discussed by their own months if are found guilty of violating the academy's Code of Honor.

This was disclosed by retired Lt. Rhonne Santiago, PMA Alumni Association Baker Committee chair, who has begun an investigation of General's case.

He said other PMA graduates facing graft and corruption charges would also be investigated and given the appropriate sanction if found guilty.

Santiago said Garcia, if found guilty by the committee, would lose all rights and privileges accorded by the association to its members which include the right to vote and be voted upon, and the right to medical, legal and financial assistance. He could also be expunged.

But more of all he would lose the honor of being called an honorable son of the PMA," Santiago stressed.

The PMAAA is a non-political and religious organization of PMA graduates. Its abilities, graduates of foreign service academies commissioned in the regular AFP forces, ex-PMA cadets who were discharged under honorable conditions and other officers who served in the PMA for at least two years are eligible for membership.

The PMAAA is chaired by retired Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Mesina, a member of PMA Class of 1970.

Abu Sayyaf kicked out of MILF turf

THE SEPARATIST Moro Islamic Liberation Front sets up units of four to seven soldiers for each Special Task Group of Gloriadly Simplicio and members of the Armed Islamic region regional center group is regional military commanders alleged ceasefire.

Maj. Gen. Agustin Resurreccion, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the MILF asked him to assure negotiations with the government, and asked the Jemaiah group to leave the MILF base camps.

He said the MILF wrote the Abu Sayyaf last Thursday, telling them to leave their camps and that they could no longer assist the MILF recognition.

"The (MILF) asked to cooperate," Resurreccion told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu denied the allegations.

"There was no coddling. We thanked them (Abu Sayyaf) only," he said in a phone interview.

Kabalu admitted the Jemaiah group had briefly stayed with MILF-controlled territory in Datapan, Iligan, Maguindanao but said the leaders were driven away.

Military troops are reportedly searching the Mount Cabalantian area of Up and Talitay where the Abu Sayyaf group was believed to have fled. Reena C. Pamaybaya

Lomibao puts love life on hold

By Luige A. del Puerto

IN THIS time of coup rumors and mass actions, and wiretapping and "jueteng" scandals, consumer would have to take a back seat for the chief of the Philippine National Police chief—at least for now.

On his 55th birthday celebration yesterday, Director General Arturo Lomibao, now engaged in a speech writer of his former boss, said senior "love happened" to his personal life have been put on hold.

"Love can wait," he smiled when asked if a wedding was forthcoming now that he's 55. "How can I intend to a wedding when all these things are happening?"

Lomibao is facing allegations that he once acted as a promoter of the illegal numbers game and that his visit to Singapore in 2004 had something to do with the presidential campaign of the opposition had claimed to have been rigged to favor President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Lomibao had denied the allegations.

Yesterday, he said he welcomed any inquiry to be could clear his name.

"I cannot focus on major events in my life... It'll do it one at a time," he said. And he has time for love, he added, to be put aside to the meantime."

Lomibao, a widower, is engaged to Brenda San Gaston, the speech writer of former PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. When Ebdane was asked, the other medical information from ranking officials, Lomibao among them.

Gaston, a single mother, had passed several official police functions, and every time she was around, Lomibao would introduce her as his partner.

When he resumed his office in March, the bayanan asked Lomibao if the PNP would use a new uniform—for wedding of an top official. He answered that a wedding was definitely in mind, but no date had been set yet.

But the last few weeks have been very bumpy to say the least, for Lomibao.

On the day he assumed office, the Senate investigation called Chief and on Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan. Week after week he faced a senior issue—be it the killing of journalists, the gathering of world leaders at the capital, the murder of high-profile personalities in Metro Manila, the jueteng controversy, mass actions on the streets, or soon, the warmongering counterparts.

At a time when could never into the mind to ease the country's least, Lomibao's birthday wish could not have been more apt—harmony and reconciliation among the spaces.

"That there will be peace, harmony, understanding among all of us Filipinos. That's my birthday wish," he said.

Lomibao believes it was God's will to put him at the helm of the PNP at this time.

"I think (of them) as challenges, and with the help of our lord, I'm confident that I will rise to the challenge and conquer all these challenges," he said.

He added: "Everything is the will of God."

Distributed by Newspaper

Erap gives up on a comeback

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HIS SUPPORTERS may still be dying to see him back in Malacañang but jailed former President Joseph Estrada has given up hopes of regaining his post.

Instead, he named actress Susan Roces, widow of his best friend Fernando Poe Jr., as the "new symbol and inspiration of the Filipino masses."

"(Roces) has given me and many many others the strength and encouragement to continue the crusade for truth and justice," he said in a statement yesterday.

He said he was also ready to support whoever would replace President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I will unequivocally support whoever is destined to be the new and popular leader of our people," he said.

"I believe that the circumstances and events unfolding before us will define who this new leader will be," the deposed president added.

Though he joined calls for Ms Arroyo to step down, Estrada said he was longer interested in getting back his post.

"I am not after regaining the lost, stolen years of my legitimate presidency," he said.

Estrada was deposed in the so-called Edsa II in 2001 and is now detained and undergoing trial for plunder.

The deposed president said his only objective was "to see the upliftment of our masses from poverty and to see the deliverance of our (country) from the bondage of corruption, lawlessness and national shame perpetrated by the present regime under the leadership of a fake president," he said.

In his statement yesterday, Estrada maintained he just "took a leave of absence from the presidency."

His supporters earlier said Estrada was the perfect man to replace President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Citing the angry remarks of Roces during her press conference last week, National Coordinating Center for Volunteers spokesperson Linggoy Alcuaz said Poe's widow could be referring to Estrada as "the one."

"She is against snap elections. She also said in a television interview that the next president should be a man. But she is not for vice president Noli de Castro," Alcuaz said.

"Personally, I think Estrada fits the qualifications (Roces) mentioned," he added.

The deposed president was airlifted to the Cardinal Santos Medical Center in San Juan on Monday afternoon for a routine medical check up.

The Sandiganbayan gave him an initial five-hour medical leave after he complained of severe pains on his operated knee.

But his private doctor said Estrada needed to stay in the hospital until today because of bronchitis.

Why Susan Roces came out smoking

By Luige A. del Puerto

ACTRESS Susan Roces was bent on moving on with her life after the Supreme Court junked in April her petition to replace her late husband, Fernando Poe Jr., in his electoral protest. She had told friends to do the same.

But a series of events and the words of a 13-year-old boy finally convinced her to carry on her fight "for the truth."

"I think the man who sparked a flame (in us) was my grandpa, but he's gone now," Roces' confidant, Marichu Vera-Perez, quoted Roces' grandson Bryan as saying.

The conversation took place in the Poe residence in Greenhills in San Juan, the night after Ms Arroyo apologized to the nation for speaking with an election official.

"You know, it's the time like this that leaders are born. They are part of the flame of revolution, a peaceful revolution," the boy told them.

"(Grandma) is now the caretaker of that flame," Bryan said

Roces and other people who had heard Bryan broke into tears. Some 20 minutes later, Roces finally decided to push through with the press conference at the Club Filipino in San Juan the following day.

"You (Ms Arroyo) do not have the right to lead the people," declared Roces, once a picture of calm and sobriety.

"The gravest thing that you have done is that you have stolen the presidency, not once, but twice," an angry Roces said.

Abadia charged

FORMER Armed Forces chief Gen. Lisandro Abadia was charged yesterday with corruption before the Sandiganbayan for allegedly amassing cash and properties worth more than P11.2 million.

In a nine-page petition, the Office of the Ombudsman told the antigraft court that there was "more than a reasonable ground" to charge the former chief of staff and his wife Violeta.

Abadia is by far the highest ranking former military official charged with corruption under the government's campaign to rid the Armed Forces of crooked officials.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio and acting Deputy Special Prosecutor Humphrey Monteroso said the illegally-acquired wealth of Abadia during his incumbency was "manifestly out of proportion to his salary" and should be confiscated.

Records submitted to the Sandiganbayan showed that in 1986, Abadia's net worth was only about P2.2 million. It, however, grew to P13.2 million in 1993.

According to Villa-Ignacio, Abadia must "show cause" why the properties in question should not be confiscated if indeed they were all conjugal assets that have been acquired legally.

Records further showed that in 1992, Abadia said in his Statement of Assets and Liabilities and Net Worth that expenses he incurred and taxes paid totaled to P766,209, while his income for the same year amounted to P3.579 million.

His income, Abadia said, included proceeds from an alleged sale of a property for P2.550 million. He, however, failed to submit any proof of real estate transaction.

For the year 1993, Abadia claimed an income of P3.275 million to "partially justify" the enormous increase in his net worth. The reported amount of cash in his name almost doubled from P4.445 million in 1992 to P8.1 million in 1993, and he even acquired another property worth P5.5 million. ***Nelson F. Flores, AFP***

Mike A booked 2 flights to US and another to HK

By Nikko Dizon and Christine O. Avendaño

DAZE of chairmanship

Last night, as of last count, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo had made two bookings for a flight to the United States and a third booking for yet another trip to Hong Kong.

And because as the subject knew which one he would be on.

Arroyo's departure has become a focus of attention among airport reporters since he happened President Macapagal-Arroyo last week announced her husband was sprouting himself from the country in order to remove people's doubts about the presidency.

But there were a total dearth of information on specifically when the First Gentleman would begin his "retirement" separation from wife and children.

Even his lawyer and spokesperson, Jose Sonza, yesterday said he did not know when his client was leaving and where he was heading to.

But Sonza said that Arroyo was not expected to be home last night.

At least as the First Gentleman seemed to be monitoring the House inquiry on the tape scandal involving alleged wiretapped conversations between the President and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

'Congenital liar'

He issued a statement denying lawyer Alan Paguia's claim that the supposed recordings included a conversation in which Arroyo allegedly offered P1.5 million to Garcillano.

Arroyo called Paguia an "unethical, congenital liar" and challenged him to "play in public that recording wherein I had supposedly made the offer, and to have the voice in that recording analyzed."

"I also challenge Atty. Paguia to repeat that malicious accusation outside the House of Representatives where he has no immunity, so that I can immediately sue him for criminal libel," the First Gentleman said.

He said he did not know where the office of Garcillano was and he had never met the commissioner's chief of staff, who was supposed to monitor the money.

Booked on different flights

Regardless of where the First Gentleman is touring, his office says, Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, with Angelito and daughter Mikaela Oreta, at least are scheduled to leave for Hong Kong on Philippine Airlines (PAL) flight PR 103 leaving at 11:30:30 p.m. today, sources at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport said.

Yesterday morning, word at the Naia was that the First Gentleman was booked on a separate PAL flight 184 that was to leave at 10:30 last night.

Shortly after lunch, however, a source said Arroyo's booking had been changed, most likely to evade media attention. But time his booking will close, was not necessarily canceled.

Over the weekend, sources said he was also booked to leave at 6:30 last night on the Los Angeles-bound PAL flight PR 102, the booking on the flight was later cancelled.

Also Cathay

He was also booked on Cathay Pacific flight CX 900 bound for Hong Kong today, another source told the Inquirer. That flight is to depart at 12 noon.

The First Gentleman first left for Hong Kong on Thursday night, with youngest son, Dimitrick, and the latter's wife and daughter. He came back on Sunday night.

Colonel blames Reds for woes

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP AQUINO, Tarlac City—Army Col. Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr. yesterday blamed communist rebels for reports linking him to an alleged plot to destabilize the Arroyo administration, and said he was relinquishing his post as the 7th Infantry Division Commander effective July 15.

Catapang, Malolos chief of staff and operations head, said he was reporting back to the Army and requested a reassignment either in the Visayas or Mindanao within the month.

Catapang told the Inquirer he was confident he is being targeted by the communist rebels.

"I am simply wondering a courtesy resignation," he said.

In a press briefing, Catapang blamed the Communist Party of the Philippines, its armed unit New People's Army and the broad-based National Democratic Front for reports implicating him as destabilization causes against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"If there's one group [that] does not go with the CPP/NPA and the NDF," he said. "It is the CPP/NPA and NDF that are destroying my cause."

He denied he was involved in any effort to topple his Arroyo.

Malolos chief Lt. Col. Romeo Dominguez told reporters there had been a request from Vice President Noli de Castro for Catapang to be assigned as his "senior military adviser."

Dominguez said Dr. Castro's request was made to the AFP chief of staff after he saw in last year's elections.

Instead of going full time, Catapang requested once a week to Dr. Castro, submitting only briefing papers on the internal security campaign in Northern Luzon, he said.

Dominguez said he found nothing irregular in Catapang's weekend visits Dr Castro.

"The CPNP knows this arrangement," he said.

Biazon says young . . .

From page A1

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said yesterday.

The chair of the Senate committee on national defense and security said he promptly relayed the officers' statement to President Macapagal-Arroyo but he did not say what her reaction was.

"These idealistic young officers are mad and they are even considering coup d'etat or mass resignation. I am advising them not to do this because if they do, this country will be thrown into chaos," Biazon, a former Armed Forces chief of staff, told reporters.

Known about destabilization plots and threats within the military flared after the release of a controversial tape of supposed conversation between Mrs. Arroyo and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano allegedly dealing with rigging the results of last year's elections.

One of those linked to the supposed plots, Army Col. Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr., denied he was involved in any effort to oust Mrs Arroyo and announced that, as a matter of courtesy, he was relinquishing his post as chief of staff and operations head of the Northern Luzon Command.

Promoted, instead of punished

Biazon said a number of junior and senior officers, including generals, and ordinary soldiers were angry that some officers allegedly involved in the election were promoted instead of being punished.

He said the officers told him of their sentiments when they met him at an undisclosed place last Saturday.

"When they hear that some senior officers had been used as political tools and possibly participated in the rondom or commission of election fraud, they are mad," Biazon said.

Biazon confirmed Agoncillo "confidential source told their names were now public knowledge because they had been mentioned in the 'ZMA-Gate's tape."

Generals, names on tape

In the tape, a man said to be Garcillano mentioned the names of "General Esperon and General Ermita." The name of a "General" also cropped up.

There was no definite indication in transcripts of the tape that the names referred to Gen. Esperon, then chief of staff for operations, Lt. Gen. Ilar Ermita, then chief of the Southern Command, or Marine Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani.

Biazon has said he was ready to close any investigations and nominated the elections in Maguindanao and Basilan. The other officers have not made any public statements.

In the tape, the man said to be Garcillano was heard saying that "Gudani" was with the opposition and "Ilar's wife" had to work with General Esperon and General Ermita."

Predictating the military

Biazon said one of the military people who met him described the participation of officers as alleged electoral fraud as "prostitution of the military."

One of those also brooded the "culture of allowing ourselves to be used to get promotions," he said.

He said the officers he talked with wanted to preserve the constitutional prohibition against the military's involvement in politics.

Biazon said the officers asked him if he would call for an investigation and he said it would depend on the outcome of House hearings on the wiretapping controversy.

Biazon did not say how Mr Arroyo reacted to the information he gave her.

"I was not waiting for any response. I am waiting for actions to be taken," Biazon said.

"We cannot disregard the concerns of the rank and file and to the AFP. There don't want these officers to be used as political tools—I am not making a conclusion here—but if nothing is done on this issue raised, anything can happen," Biazon said.

Biazon said the military was "tamed" for now because the officers were waiting to see how "the institutions and the institutional processes" would handle the accusations leveled against Mr Arroyo.

No force-sitter

In Cebu City, retired Col. Billy Bibit claimed that one statement of officers to move against Mr Arroyo, which he said began late last year, had intensified in the wake of the tape scandal.

He said those AFP elements were concerned Mr Arroyo should resign and were just waiting for an opportune time to do so.

Bibit, a member of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement which plotted the ouster of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, said he would not be a "bystander" if the time came to act.

"In this world, there are three kinds of people. There are the make things happen, those who watch things happen, [and] those who wonder what happened. I'm neither of the last two."

Asked whether he belonged, he laughed: "You as a member are [the] are or member one). We make things happen," said Bibit, a retired Cebu marine officer who was implicated in the aborted Oakwood mutiny.

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Bibit, a member of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement which plotted the ouster of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, said he would not be a "bystander" if the time came to act.

"In this world, there are three kinds of people. There are the make things happen, those who watch things happen, [and] those who wonder what happened. I'm neither of the last two."

Asked whether he belonged, he laughed: "You as a member one (We are or member one). We make things happen," said Bibit, a retired Cebu marine officer who was implicated in the aborted Oakwood mutiny.

He said he was ready to testify against Garcillano if a hearing should be held. With a report from Tetch D. Quinsaat

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3 RP-based groups win green Oscars

From page A1

able management and harvesting of the Kikuyu escarpment forests in Kenya.

The BPCP also gave $28,000 funding to a local environmentalist group led by Dan Bennett for the preservation of Polilio Island's monitor lizard.

Carmela Española and her group received $12,500 from the BPCP so it can protect the habitat of the Calayan rail (Gallirallus calayanensis), a rare bird species discovered in the Babuyan Group of Islands in May last year.

A total of $600,000 or grants ranging between $7,500 to $75,000 were given to 28 different conservation teams chosen from over 400 applicants.

The awards were given on June 23 at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. Renowned environmentalist and Harvard professor Edward O. Wilson was the guest of honor.

The BP Conservation Programme is a partnership initiative between British Petroleum, the Wildlife Conservation Society, BirdLife International, Fauna and Flora International and Conservation International. The program aims to develop and support the skills and networks of future generations of conservation professionals who are working to address global biodiversity conservation priorities at a local level.

Severely endangered

The Philippine crocodile (Crocodylus mindorensis) is the most severely endangered crocodile in the world. The species was rediscovered in 1999 in Luzon, which led to the establishment of the Crocodile Rehabilitation, Observance and Conservation (CROC) Project, funded by the BP Conservation Programme in 2002 and 2003.

The $75,000 award will enable CROC Project, a community-based research, observance and conservation project, to continue to work with the critically endangered Philippine crocodile, a freshwater species of which, there are approximately only 50 left, in Northern Luzon.

The CROC Project is the first group to implement conservation activities for the species. The once-rampant hunting of the crocodiles has ceased and there has been a two-fold increase in the non-hatchling population size.

A local conservation organization, the Mabuwaya Foundation Inc., was also established to spearhead the Philippine crocodile conservation activities in Luzon.

With continued support from the BPCP, the foundation is confident it will become a full-fledged independent and effective organization focused on Philippine crocodile and wetland conservation by the end of 2007.

Monitoring the lizard

The preservation of Polilio Island's monitor lizard received $28,000 in funding to further study and preserve the endemic amphibians known locally as *bayawak*.

The environmentalist group led by Dan Bennett will use nonintrusive methodologies developed on Polilio Island, Quezon Province, to investigate the distribution and status of the monitor lizard in the remaining forest fragments of Luzon and its adjacent islands, and to identify key conservation resources.

For rare Calayan rail

After accidentally discovering an endemic flightless bird now called the Calayan rail (Gallirallus calayanensis), in the Babuyan Islands in May last year, Carmela Española sought funding from the BPCP to preserve the bird species that can only be found in the Philippines.

The rail is the size of a small crow with dark brown plumage and bright orange red legs and beak. Calayan residents said they used to catch the rail, locally known as *piding*, for food, unaware it was a rare species.

BPCP gave $12,500 to Española's group to determine the species' actual conservation threat status and to define the boundaries of a planned protected area in the Babuyan Islands.

"We will conduct baseline research on the rail's population and distribution. The proposed project will produce a thorough threat assessment for the rail and its habitat and formulate workable conservation measures in collaboration with local government units, nongovernment organizations and other institutions," Española said in an interview.

She added that the playback census technique will be used in assessing the rail's population and distribution.

"Our study will include notes on the habitat requirements, threats and ecology of the Calayan rail based on field observations and from interviews with local people," Española said.

"We want to launch an environmental education campaign in schools and forest communities. We want to conduct workshops with stakeholders so we can draw a conservation action plan for the Calayan rail," she said.

Nene twits Joker: He's like a bat

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the minority had managed to get the House way to censure President Joseph Estrada. Otherwise, those seeking the President's ouster should get out of their very offices and talk true gas and truncheons in the streets, Arroyo said.

"Joker should be the last person to talk about subterfuge as a virtue. He should be the last person to lecture the opposition on what to do regarding Cloma, especially on the matter of impeachment," Pimentel retorted.

Pimentel likened Arroyo to a liar, attuned to much closer to those spouting lies than to no-nukes in the sea between animals and birds in the dawn of history and pretended it was "neither animal nor fowl."

Common struggle

"He is actually trying to speak from both sides of his mouth, appearing to defend Cloma, but at the same time actually saying nothing substantial in favor of or against Cloma," he said in a statement.

"The people expect more from Joker to the light of our common struggle against the Marcos dictatorship," he added.

Arroyo, who served as Pimentel's counsel when he was charged in jail during the martial law years, shot back: "The impeachment and the resign processes, both intended to remove GMA, have now become incidental to the anti-corporation of who will succeed GMA."

It's urging the President and Vice President Noli de Castro to resign to pave the way for a snap presidential and vice presidential elections, Pimentel said, "has let the cat out of the opposition bag," Arroyo said in a statement.

"They want to grab the reins of power although they do not have the mandate from the people. The major movement is a ruse, a coverup for their true intentions...they want to douse (Senate) resistance to her power," he said.

Out of order

Arroyo said that Pimentel's clamor for Mr. Arroyo's resignation was "perfectly in order," but has said for De Castro's resignation was "definitely out of order."

De Castro, Arroyo pointed out, was elected by the same voters who elected the people, and his job description was to succeed the President, in asking De Castro to resign, Pimentel is undermining the Constitution and his solemn oath to uphold it, Arroyo said.

"By insisting on Joker resign so that the opposition can take over, they have muddled the terms of duties and obfuscated the people," Arroyo said.

In so urban his loyalties, Jay Arroyo had this to say: "Are We Global? No News; Care for upholding the Constitution, period, which Pimentel, a child of the Constitution, continuously abhors."

Arroyo has found an unlikely ally in Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

Numerical superiority

"If I belong to the House opposition, I will file the impeachment complaint," Enrile said. "I'm not only for the Guy of the opposition...It's the duty of the House of Representatives regardless of party," Enrile told reporters. "That's why they're the impending body."

Pimentel, however, maintained his opposition to the filing of impeachment charges against the President in view of the "numerical superiority" of administration lawmakers to block the move.

UST calls for 'truth . . .

(Turn to page A-2)

that will result in genuine democratic reforms.

De La Salle University and the University of the Philippines College of Law earlier urged the President to leave Malacañang.

For its part, the University Student Council of University of the Philippines-Manila called on both Mrs Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro to resign.

The Alumni Gate locked on Monday did not exclude the students as it stop them but said it was up to her to do what was best for the country.

More clarification

Dr. Armando de Jesus, the rector for student affairs, said the president of UST did not necessarily preclude the possibility of the university joining calls for the President to step down.

"I think we have to hide for time and wait for issues to be further clarified," he told the Inquirer in an interview.

Dr. Jesus, a sociologist, said the UST president considered the general sentiments of the middle class, which represents most of the school's 32,000 students.

"The middle class is usually the silent majority so it's very important to articulate their sentiments," he said. "They usually have more to lose. History would tell us that where the middle class goes, the country goes."

Dr. Jesus said the UST position was an "elaboration" version of Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales' pastoral letter read during Sunday Mass in which he asked Arroyo to "submit her solidarity while reminding the President that seeking forgiveness should not abandon accountability.

In a statement, UST said the multi-sectoral should be composed of non-partisan sectors "enjoying general social acceptance" such as the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, the religious sector, the academe, and business and nongovernment organizations.

"It will be the task of the commission to listen and cite truth, establish culpability, and impose sanctions on violations," it said. "The duty and the branches of the government—the executive and the legislative—must agree to the established norms of the commission, submit to its sanctions, and cooperate with it wholeheartedly."

Other schools

UST officials are expected to present their position at the meeting of the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and the Manila Archdiocesan and Diocesan Schools Association at St. Scholastica's College in Manila on Wednesday.

CEAP insiders said they were expecting a heated debate, considering that La Salle, another key CEAP member, had already released a strongly worded statement demanding Ms. Arroyo's resignation.

UST student council executive on political issues, apparently did not want to go that far yet.

"It is important that truth and its pursuit must be managed well, lest it wreck the tranquility of the country," it said. "Remind this, all attempts to resolve the crisis should conform to the Constitution and the rule of the law."

The Student Christian Movement of the Philippines (SCMP) called on CEAP and the CBCP to "stand by what is true and help usher justice to our Filipino people."

Elena Lim-Castalloni, SCMP chairperson, said that the schools were also joining calls for Arroyo to step down.

In Baguio City, the faculty of UP Baguio endorsed Ms. Arroyo's admission of talking with an election official as "not a mere lapse in judgment" but a "premeditated abuse of power in connivance with."

"In these times of grave economic and political crisis, we need a President with unquestioned moral ascendancy and political legitimacy," the faculty said in a statement which was issued after the university council's committee for the welfare of students on Monday.

"The issue political crisis in our country has established that there is [no] good Arroyo but lost both."

The Baguio teachers accused Malacañang of removing the touch of Ms. Arroyo's "clear violation of the Constitution in her efforts to manipulate election results in her favor."

Watered-down apology

"We cannot accept her watered-down apology couched as it was by shirking of the real offense of cheating, and prettified as usual by statements on the economic progress we are experiencing, and democratic processes and institutions we all enjoy," the faculty said.

The students assailed Malacañang's "clever manipulation" by "conditioning the public to believe that there are no viable alternatives to Mrs Arroyo."

They called this an insult to the Filipino people. "We have not lacked national leaders who are encouraging us, instilled by simplicity, genuine self-sacrifice and the political will for reforming and instituting fundamental reforms."

What Ms Arroyo should do, the faculty said, is to "make the supreme sacrifice of stepping down and facing the consequences of her offense."

Noli, too

In a statement, the UP Manila Student Council said the President had "betrayed the public trust."

"We call on her and her Vice President Noli De Castro to resign, considering that by PG Mil's own admission, her involvement with Comelec puts in question even her running mate's election," the council said.

It also called on Senate President Franklin Drilon, who had in the past reiterated support for Ms Arroyo, to "take a stand for reforms and call for new elections, as is provided in the Constitution."

The council also called for a deeper probe into the "Glorygate" tape.

Shadow play

DST noted that there was a need to "dispel the darkness and truth-seeking," pointing out that Ms Arroyo's carefully-worded statements, the congressional inquiry on the controversial tape, and similar coverage all seemed to be "working toward shadow play, thus spreading the truth."

"This amount to nothing but shadow play with the truth cast in even darkening reality," it said.

UST also advised the media to maintain accuracy in reporting on the crisis, and the public to keep an open mind "in addressing the theft of lies and discrimination from the grain of truth" and reject violence.

Already, instructors within the UST have been holding dialogues and discussions "to clear the issues and arrive at sound and effective solutions."

A Mass for Peace, Unity and Truth is set to be held on July 7 at the Santissimo Rosario Parish Church on the UST campus.

Middle forces

Education Secretary Florencio Abad said the government was concerned about the views expressed by groups belonging to "middle" forces, which, according to him, were instrumental in the success of the people power uprisings in 1986 and 2001.

Abad is a former Makabayan leader. Abad acknowledged that the government was now moving to "explain the situation" to these groups.

Online petition

The media has these days come up with petition that are either underscore or endorse in connection with the President's admission that she talked to an election official during the canvassing of votes in last year's balloting, according to Abad.

"So there is an ongoing debate and a lot of that will be influenced by the actions of the President and the government in the coming days," he said.

A group of writers have also started and signed an online petition calling for the ouster or resignation of Ms. Arroyo. They said Ms Arroyo had repeatedly violated the freedom of expression by censoring media, arresting and detaining a blind reporter to discourage coverage.

The writers include Joy Barrios, couple Dolly and Alice Guillermo, Elmer Ordoñez and Epifanio San Juan Jr. With reports from Christina G. Bonoan and Nikko Dizon in Baguio

Flash floods alert raised in Quezon, Aurora

THE WEATHER: Satellite warned of possible flash floods again ravaging Quezon and Aurora provinces as tropical depression "Emong" entered the country yesterday.

Packing winds of 55 kph, Emong was spotted east northeast of Infanta, Quezon early yesterday morning and moving toward mainland Luzon by noon yesterday.

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Administration raised storm signal No. 1 in Luzon at 11 a.m. yesterday and warned that Quezon and Aurora, the two provinces that were devastated by successive typhoons last year, could again be evacuated.

"It's insignificant in terms of wind strength, but landslides and flash floods are usually caused by much rainfall, like Winnie last year. Look what happened to Quezon," said Nathaniel Cruz, Pagasa weather bureau chief.

He said Emong, the 18th storm to hit the country this year, would affect Camarines Norte, Polillo Island, Aurora, Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Zambales, Pangasinan, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Benguet, Ifugao, La Union and Ilocos Sur.

Cruz said tropical depressions usually carried much rain but had little wind strength. Several days of continuous rain could trigger landslides, he said.

Some places which may not even have recovered from past disasters could just be waiting for a triggering mechanism, like rain or an earthquake, before caving in, he said.

But the weather station said storm signal No. 1 could move a basis for issuing an advice to evacuate.

"They (residents) are in the best position to know if they should evacuate. They know the place, they can monitor changes in land and soil use. Their decisions can be based on experience," Cruz said.

The average rainfall for storm signal No. 1 is around 100 mm in 24 hours, Cruz said.

The volume of rainfall during the successive typhoons that hit Quezon and Aurora in late 2004 reached 300 mm in 24 hours, Cruz said. The rains had been going on for at least a week before the typhoons struck, he said.

The resulting floods and landslides left 149 people dead, hundreds more injured and caused P843 million worth of damage to public structures and agriculture in the two provinces.

Cruz said a similar disaster could hit the southern Luzon provinces if southwest tropical depression comes in soon after Emong, following days of concentrated rains.

"But we have not monitored any more tropical cyclones entering the country yet," he said.

Pagasa is waiting for the acquisition of two Doppler radars that could predict the volume of rainfall for every tropical cyclone.

"It would greatly improve our forecast capability," Cruz said. *Blanche S. Rivera*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, July 6, 2005
14th Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Gen 41:55–42:5, 42:6, 7, 17–24
Gospel: Matthew 10:1–7

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority over the unclean spirits in order them cast out and to heal every disease and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon, the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, the one who would betray him.

Jesus sent these twelve on mission with the instructions: "Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

"On your preachers that message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"

Commentary

Jesus calls his disciples by name and gives them authority to continue his work—to do for ourselves a violent and unjust and to heal people of disease and distress that hinders them from life as children of God. They are named but called only 'called the twelve'—a communal sy- of disciples, not to be seen primarily as individuals and they are given a mission to their own people first—the lost sheep—the wasted and majority of people in Israel (which are the same in number and needs every nation). The message is clear...the kingdom, long awaited of the prophets that called for justice and reconciliation of the poor in true worship of the God of the covenant is close at hand, near to them—near to show to the our presence and person. So we belong to a community (at least twelve) and are we known for being good news?

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Bahrain's envoy in Iraq wounded in ambush

BAGHDAD—Bahrain's top diplomat to Iraq was wounded Tuesday in an apparent kidnap attempt three days after the abduction of Egypt's ambassador designate, as the Iraqi government chastised diplomats for travelling without protection.

A spokesperson for the Iraqi government said Egypt's Ihab al-Sharif may have contracted grazes close to his captors, which compromised his security.

At '23 Freedom' George W. Bush hailed the sacrifices made in rebuilding Iraq, the latest continued to rage, with four more on guard down on their way to work at Baghdad airport.

Gunmen aboard a pickup truck opened fire on Hassan al-Ansari, the Bahraini charge d'affaires, while he was travelling in his car with diplomats in some places in the upscale Mansur district, an interior ministry source said.

Yarmuk hospital said Ansari was treated for superficial wounds in his right shoulder before leaving with guards.

Witnesses said Ansari was ambushed by at least eight gunmen after leaving his residence.

"Two men got out of their cars and surrounded us from 'get out of your car' and, at me, 'get back inside,'" a witness who requested anonymity said.

Instead, the diplomat kept going, and one of the men shot at him with an assault rifle and joined, he said.

Ansari's car slowed down, but when the men ran after him he accelerated and managed to get away.

Two hundred meters further on, Ansari stopped in a street called 14 Tha-ura, near a policeman and cried out: "I am a diplomat, help me!"

The policeman named Adel said "he was bleeding a lot. His suit, coat and tie were covered with blood. A short time later, a police patrol passed by and took him to the hospital."

No group has yet claimed responsibility for abducting Egypt's chief, who was set to become the first ambassador from an Arab nation to Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Sharif was also the first head of mission to be abducted since Iraq's hostage crisis began.

The Iraqi government's spokesperson expressed surprise Sharif was traveling on Baghdad's perilous roads without much protection, and said that his security may have been compromised by contacts he may have had with political groups sympathetic to insurgents.

"The only advice we give is that if a diplomat from this mission or another wants to contact political groups that may be close to armed groups, that the least he can do is tell the government which can best assist responsibility," Lt. Ali Habba told reporters.

"We do not know the circumstances surrounding Sharif's kidnapping but this is one of the possibilities."

Habba said the targeting of foreign diplomats is part of an indiscriminate effort by insurgents to discourage countries from dealing with the Iraqi government. AFP

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Bin Laden may be in Afghan south, Pakistan says

ISLAMABAD—Al Qaida chief Osama bin Laden and his close allies might be hiding in southern Afghanistan, which has seen a sharp rise in militant violence in recent weeks, a Pakistani minister said in remarks published on Tuesday.

The whereabouts of Bin Laden, architect of the Sept. 11 attacks, and top militants such as his deputy Ayman al-Zawahri and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, are not known but they are suspected of hiding among the rugged Afghan-Pakistani border.

Although both these US allies, tension has risen between Afghanistan and Pakistan over Afghan and US military accusations that militants launch attacks into Afghanistan from the safety of Pakistan.

Afghan and US officials threw also say bin Laden is not in Afghanistan, suggesting he must be in the Pakistani. Pakistani officials insist he is not in their country.

Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao is quoted as saying the possibility that bin Laden was in Pakistan and said the fugitive leader and his allies might be hiding in Afghanistan's eastern reach.

"The possibility of Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden and his close aide, Ayman al-Zawahri, hiding in that area cannot be ruled out," Sherpao told the Pakistani press, according Associated Press of Pakistan.

Southern parts of Afghanistan were not under effective control of the Afghan government, he said.

The US military is under order to Afghanistan, Col. Omar Abdelhoud, told a news conference in Kabul last month he did not believe bin Laden or Omar were in Afghanistan, though he did not say where he thought they were. Reuters

DISMANTLING A MEMORIAL
Workers remove crosses from the private Wall memorial near the former allied Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, Tuesday, July 5. The memorial is now being dismantled after the lease for the site expired in 2004. The 1,065 crosses stand for the number of victims killed at the border from 1961 to 1989. AP

Militants storm Hindu shrine in India

NEW DELHI—Four unidentified militants killing bombs and firing automatic weapons stormed a Hindu temple at one of India's holiest religious sites on Tuesday, setting off a fierce gunbattle with police that left all the attackers dead, news reports said.

The sprawling 33-hectare complex in the northern city of Ayodhya stands in the heart of India's biggest religious controversy. It is the site where Hindu nationalists demolished an ancient Muslim mosque in 1992, sparking religious riots that killed more than 2,000 people.

Hours before the shootout with police, two suicide bombers, identified as Hindu, detonated explosives in the car they were driving when they were stopped at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Ayodhya, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

The attackers then opened fire with automatic weapons and threw grenades at the temple, which is built on the spot where Hindus believe the god Ram was born, the reports said.

Police officials said the militants were dressed in military fatigues and were armed with assault rifles and grenades.

Hindu leaders claim the mosque is Ayodhya, 550 km east of New Delhi, was built by Mogul rulers at the site of a Hindu temple. They believe the site is the birthplace of Hinduism's most important god. Hindu Muslims say there is no proof of that claim. The dispute is still working its way through India's courts.

The men arrived in car and packed it outside the security perimeter before speaking in, Indian said.

"We were getting general information that terrorists can attack the city ... There has been a security lapse. We will fix responsibility and take necessary action," he told Sites (ANI) television News. AP

Assassination try on Sharon feared

JERUSALEM—Israeli President Moshe Katsav said on Monday the recent epidemic of pro-settler rabbis in Israel's Gaza pullout could incite extremists to try to assassinate Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

"In the struggle over the disengagement someone is likely to distort the rabbis' messages," Katsav told Army Radio.

He would, he said, could be "extremist actions" and "the distorted conclusion that to prevent Israel's dismemberment, one must assassinate the prime minister". The Shin Bet security service on Sunday reassured Sharon and members of his cabinet that he had improved security, arresting dozen of evidence against Israeli leaders ahead of the pullout due to begin in mid-August.

In recent weeks, many pro-settler rabbis have sharpened their rhetoric against the withdrawal from land they see as a biblical birthright, condemning it as a violation of Jewish law and a danger to Israel's existence.

Such talk has evoked memories of verbal attacks on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin before his assassination in 1995 by an ultra-rightist Jew opposed to his peace moves with Palestinians.

Sharon aims to evacuate all 21 Jewish settlements in Gaza, which is home to 1.3 million Palestinians, and four of 120 in the West Bank.

Palestinians welcome any Israeli withdrawals from lands occupied in the 1967 Middle East war. However, they say they fear Sharon intends to leave Gaza mainly in order to cement Israel's hold on much larger settlements in the West Bank.

Jewish settler leaders have rallied for passive resistance to the planned evacuation of the settlements.

Hoping to dissipate that message, right-wing legislator Effi Eitam said on Israel Radio he planned to meet rabbis and settlers to draft a charter of non-violence to avoid clashes with Israeli soldiers during the pullout.

"In this charter we will have a clause specifying that we cannot be any Jewish's weapons in the evacuation area. We are trying to ensure that even if the atmosphere heats up there will be a good chance of preventing a disaster," Eitam said.

Israeli security officials have said they plot to collect the army-issued weapons entered by some of the 8,000 settlers facing evacuation. Reuters

Japanese PM wins crucial parliament vote

TOKYO—Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi scored a slim victory on Tuesday when parliament's lower house approved bills to privatize the postal system, legislation that is the centerpiece of his reform agenda.

Analysts had said a failure to pass the bills, which faced opposition from within his own ruling party, would be tantamount to a no-confidence vote, a fatal threat to call a snap election if the legislation was rejected.

Japanese media said close to 40 members of Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) defied party policy and voted against the bills, bringing the final tally to 233 votes in support of the bills and 208 against them.

The LDP holds 250 seats in the powerful 480-seat lower chamber.

The bills will next be submitted to the upper house, where it needs to be approved in order for them to be enacted.

"We still have a long way ahead of us in the upper house, but we will do our best to have them enacted," Heizo Takenaka, cabinet minister in charge of postal privatization, told reporters after the vote.

Privatization of the postal system, which has assets of over $3 trillion including the world's largest bank, had long been a taboo within the LDP. Reuters

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SPORTS

E-mail sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyboy B. Melendres

BILLIARDS: 2005 World Pool Championships, 12 noon and 2 p.m. (t), 4:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.; ESPN – Bayty Pro Billiards at Bay Front Hotel, Manila Bay

CYCLING: Tour de Nanoc, Stage 6, 8 a.m.; ESPN2 – Lance Armstrong's preference live test for this season's yellow jersey.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Olympic body castigates BAP over caging turmoil

By Marang B. Castillo

A BAN silver the international basketball federation (FIBA) freeze the country out of international competitions, the Philippine Olympic Committee fired yet another salvo at the Basketball Association of the Philippines. This is all you need.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco yesterday bluntly rejected the cops body's plea for reconsideration and then boasted its readiness for "not taking care of matters when it will lead time to."

Cojuangco's response to the BAP's appeal was swift and loud, earlier missed no words. He stressed that the "unsavory predicament of Philippine basketball can only be attributed to the gross misconduct of the BAP."

The BAP through deputy secretary general Lito Alvarez, wrote Cojuangco on Monday asking that its team be allowed to defend its Southeast Asian Basketball Association crown. Cojuangco rejected the request.

"The POC denial of BAP request for a temporary permit to allow [the] SBP organized team to represent the country in the Stoba in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where the Philippines is the ... holder of the Stoba crown for the past three years, is indeed a very sad day for the country and for athletes," Alvarez wrote in his letter.

The BAP explanations on Thursday prompted Stoba organizers and the Filta to bar the participation of any Philippine team in the tournament, which fired off yesterday.

The Filta, in a letter to the POC on Monday, also effectively prevents the Philippines from seeing action in the 4th Asia (formerly 6th) championships in Doha, Qatar, in September. The Stoba is the qualifying tournament for the Asian crown.

"The denial of our request by POC not our Stoba crown and our chance to participate in the 4the Asia basketball championship in Doha, Qatar," Alvarez said.

The country has been preparing for the Doha tourna-

PUTTING THEIR FOOT DOWN. Cojuangco (right) and POC chair Robert Aventajado at yesterday's PBA Forum

ment with the POC appointing Clint Reyes as coach of a national program general toward answering the Philippines back into the Olympic competition.

With the current situation, the Philippine Basketball Association, chief backer of the Jun-Miguel Cuny-funded program, may pull the plug on the preparations. (See related story)

The Philippines also stands to lose its chance of defending the basketball title in the Southeast Asian Games which the country is hosting on Nov. 27 to Dec. 5.

But Cojuangco pointed out that the BAP rather than "sal-dowa the causes for its suspension and eventual expulsion from the POC, flaunted its relationship with Filta Asia."

"There's a happy relationship between Filta Asia and the BAP," Cojuangco grudgingly acknowledged.

Cojuangco, who was yesterday's guest in the PBA Forum along with POC chair Robert Aventajado and former world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, said there have requested the Filta to expedite its investigation of the issues that led to the BAP expulsion.

"Hong ang inaging aspect or ongoing kaldo, madali among naresolbe and problema. Dlad this here, a conversation among men, the problem would have been easily solved), "said Cojuangco.

PBA could pull out of nat'l team

By Jane Manaloy

WITH no international tournament to prepare for, the Philippine Basketball Association could temporarily pull out its resources from the team's national basketball team.

"It's an option," said PBA commissioner Noli Sale yesterday a day after the International basketball federation (Fiba) suspended the Philippines from international competitions.

"But we are still studying the possibilities. What's definite is the PBA has been very unhappy with the way things have turned out."

Jun-Miguel Cuny, the team's chief supporter, has spent millions to prepare a competitive national squad composed of PBA players for the 5th Asia Championships slated in Doha, Qatar, this September.

The 4the Asia Championships is the qualifying for the world championships next year to Saitama, Japan. The 2007 edition is the qualifier for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

With the Fiba suspension, the country has been barred from playing in the Southeast Asian basketball association championships where the top two countries advance to the 4the Asia Championships.

National coach Chot Reyes, however, is "toying the current situation will be turned out, with an eye toward the program's true target: The Beijing Olympics.

"We would like to remind everyone that the team and the program was built for the 2006 Asia-Asian which is the qualifier for the 2008 Olympics," said Reyes.

"Hopefully for the 2007 team championships," Reyes added, "our basketball leaders would have found a way to get us back into the Fiba. I feel there may be no continue implementing the program for 2007."

Manalo first Pinoy in round of 64

MACHINE, Taiwan—Marlon Manalo went to the fifth straight time Monday night and became the first Filipino to clinch a berth in the knockout phase of the 2005 World Championship at the Taoyuan Business Exhibition Center here.

The 29-year-old Manalo trounced E. Singh Lilly of India, 5-0, in an otherwise lackluster Group 15 action.

Manalo, the only Filipino to reach the quarterfinals of last year's event, will face two more matches in the group stage.

The round of 64 begins today. The top four players in each group will advance to the next phase. The field has been split into 16 groups with eight players each.

Meanwhile, defending champion Alex Ongchuan, Gandy Mallo, Dennis Orcollo and Rodolfo Luat each saved one more win in their two outings to join Manalo in the final 64 of the $250,000 event.

Ongchuan ran atop Group 1 with 8 points, but needs one more win to advance outright.

"SAVA" Reyes serves a mathematical chance of advancing in the next round.

The 27-year-old Filipino-Canadian whipped Charles Bryant of the United States, 5-0, then beat Peter Gorender of South Africa, 5-2.

Mills, the Singapore top seeded of this year's fun Miguel Anton Gabril Tour, also swept his two matches Monday night to improve to 4-1 in Group 10. The Intercontinental identical 5-2 wins over John Schmidt of the US and Indonesia Handiwinsky of Germany.

Set to be outdone, Orcollo posted easy 5-1 decisions over Hoo Devine of Wales and Andreas Valdon of Finland to up his mark to 4-1 in Group 5.

Luat downed 4-1 in Group 2.

Two other Filipinos, Warren Kiamco and Roland Ricafort, remained in the thick of the battle. Kiamco owns a 3-2 mark as may rival Jose Gabriel Antonio Adonis at landing for the fourth spot with a 2-3 record in Group 12.

Not in contention were Efren "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Antonio "Boboy" Lining. The trio are in danger of early exits after suffering a setback each.

Reyes took a 2-3 loss to Roman Hybler of the Czech Republic in Group 4. The 1999 champion must now win over Hubei's Tony Drago and American Mike Davis, that hope that De Luna loses to Hong Chin ching of Taiwan. Moreover, Reyes must also earn two victories over Davis or have a chance of moving forward.

Bustamante was finished by Thomas Engert, 4-0, and need at 1-3 in Group 7.

Pagunsan shares Japan Am lead

PAGUNSAN starts to make the match plays.

JOSE Pagunsan stringed three birdies from the 12th hole on route to a four-under par 68 Monday and a share of the lead with his fellow elites in the first round of the Japan Amateur Championship at the Ozaiwa Golf Club in Tottori, Japan, yesterday.

The 26-year-old amateur birdied gained about two more birdies going out to register a four-injured-green bogey on nine of 34-34.

Pagunsan, who is being coddled by buddy and former national amateur champion Antonio Wandoni, looked a crack in earlier the top 22 who will figure in head-to-head knockout duels starting Wednesday.

The rain-drenched tournament drew 155 players from across Asia.

Pagunsan played impressively in the tight, up-and-down Daisen course despite completing only 11 holes during the practice round in the driving rain on Sunday.

The Filipino's start is hashed by par services company KTH and under the auspices of the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

He gained a spot in the tournament for being a member of the reigning Asian team which beat Japan for the Bernhard Trophy in Italy last year, according to retired admiral Teddy Peñaredor, the NGAP secretary general.

Meanwhile, ace shotmaker Jayne Ignacio and juniorller Pauline Arao open their bids in the Hyundai Motorcar Ladies Amateur Golf Championship today in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

Ignacio and Arao are entered in the individual and team competition of the 54-hole tournament at the rough-hewn harbour Golf and country Club layout.

Better insurance on cost of terror attacks urged

PARIS—Some of the world's most advanced economies remain ill-equipped to survive the fallout from a major terrorist attack, the OECD warned Tuesday, despite widespread efforts since the Sept. 11 attacks to spread insurance risk between public and private sectors.

"There are still significant gaps in coverage, which could be revealed by another large-scale attack," said the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a Paris-based club of 30 industrialized countries, in a statement prepared to accompany publication of a report on terrorism risk insurance.

Almost four years after he jacked passenger jets slammed into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C., killing nearly 3,000 people and running up the world's biggest ever insurance bill, the calculation of such risks remains fraught with difficulties and the worst kinds of attacks unimaginable, the 289-page study says.

While governments are rightly devoting attention to preventing further attacks, the report adds, "ensuring adequate financial coverage of the terrorism risk, if prevention were to fail, is a no less important policy issue to mitigate the potentially devastating impacts of future attacks."

Faced with a shortfall of reasonably priced insurance, the United States, Australia, France, Germany and the Netherlands stepped in after the Sept. 11 attacks to offer last-resort government guarantees to their companies. Two other OECD countries, Britain and Spain, already had similar schemes in place before 2001.

But more is still patchy even in some of the countries where it is most readily available, said Cecile Wignal-Semain of the OECD's financial markets division, who directed the study.

Only one half of US corporations had taken out some insurance by the end of last year, while in Germany the figure stands at less than three per cent of eligible companies, Ms. Wignal-Semain said. "Germany has a very large exposure. A whole swathe of the economy is uninsured."

The report also cautions that those inter-bankers primarily exclude the worst kind of scenario—in which a chemical or nerve agent, nuclear device or radiation-spewing "dirty bomb" is used to attack a major city...and governments guarantees often don't provide adequate cover either.

Even if they did, smaller states could be bankrupted by such a "mega-terrorist attack"—which the OECD said could incur losses of up to US$200 billion, or nearly eight times the US$32 billion bill faced by insurers after Sept. 11.

"In some smaller countries, it considers will smaller insurance markets, even if the state came to the rescue it would find it difficult to cover those risks without endangering the stability of its entire economy," Wignal-Semain said.

Post Sept. 11 prediction that financial markets would shoot the insurance shortfall with new "terrorism bonds" and other risk-spreading products have proven overly optimistic, the OECD report says. "A sustained market for such financial instruments to cover terrorism risks has not yet emerged."

Instead, the report suggests that international risk-sharing agreements may be needed along the lines of existing reinsurance or nuclear damage—establishing member countries to help cover clean-up and compensation costs for such others' plant accidents—but conviction that there is not enough political will for a far-reaching deal on terror risk.

Longer cures with bigger budgets and insurance that lasts, like Britain and France, are less inclined to sign up to such a scheme than neighbours less able to shoulder the economic impact of a major terrorist strike above, Wignal-Semain said.

In the end, groups of smaller states are more likely to set up regional schemes to reinsure their terror risks, she predicted. "But whether we would have to wait for another attack before that happens, only the future will tell."

AP

A PWN jumps in the air...during a bid at police with...
Princes Street, in Edinburgh, Scotland, July 4 about...

NASA probe leav... debris trail on co...

PASADENA, Calif.—A spectacular collision between a spacecraft and a comet has dived a huge plume of pulverized material from the comet's nucleus that could unlock the secret of how life arrived on Earth, NASA scientists said on Monday.

The first images received from the Deep Impact fly-by spacecraft showed a small fireball followed by a much larger, incandescent flash that engulfed one trail of the comet Tempel 1 as the impactor smashed into its surface at 1:52 a.m. EDT (0552 GMT) on Monday.

The impactor was expected spontaneously into the comet at 37,000 kph...the speed a would take to fly from New York to Los Angeles in about six minutes.

The collision, which occurred 134 million km from Earth, marks the first time a spacecraft has come in contact with a comet.

Observations on the ground reported that the explosion brightened the comet by a factor of 5 within 15 minutes of impact, scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory...

WORLD BRIEFS

Britain drafts Iraq pullout plan

LISBON—Britain's defence ministry has drafted plans for a... Iraq over the next 18 months and a big deployment to Afghani... ed. When asked about the article however, a defence ministry... pointed out that British troops would be in the ground military fo... The Iraqi government. "To what would represent the biggest s... armed forces since the Iraq war, the first stage of a succession... take place this summer with a handover of security to Iraqis a... the Financial Times said. Without citing sources, the newspap... pointed out the ability of Iraq's home-grown security forces to... security operations.

UN urges tougher measures on ...

TOKYO—Globe must boost security of their nuclear sites an... violations smuggling of nuclear materials, the top International... watchdog said. The global body urged countries to sign... loopholes in an international law on the protection of atomic ... operators. Many countries agree that the "1979 Convention on ... of Nuclear (CPPNM) needs to be updated to the post-Soviet e... says Agency (IAEA) Deputy Director General Dmitri Rogov, in ... comments physical protection of nuclear materials being sent... domestic purposes. The amendments to the convention make ... countries or smuggled nuclear material and "loosen the rel... logs," he added.

Fujimori eyes return from Japan

LIMA—Former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori was one ... turning his nose to Japan and running for office after the for... identification card. Sonji Fujimori, the youngest of the ex-leade... their name, announced Thursday that the foreign ministry offices in ... "will allow my father to register as a presidential candidate in ... pointers, adding that he will personally take the document to ... president has lived in Japan since fleeing the country in 2000... has denied involvement in human rights violations, while it awaits ... abuses and corruption. Japan has refused to extradite Fujimori ...

Hamas rebuffs call for Palestine...

GAZA—The Islamic militant group Hamas on Monday rejected ... truce proposal, rewarding President Mahmoud Abbas who was ... control days after Israeli pullout. Abbas, facing public pressure ... Palestinian areas, last week offered a plan for a ceasefire to ... smooth evacuation of Israeli settlers from the occupied Pa... Hamas has decided to reject the offer of [Islamic] Palestinian ... movement," said Hamas spokesman Ghazi al-Hamad. "Coming ... time without he doubt." He said the decision was taken follow... more within Hamas.

Protesters, police clash ahead of G8 Summit

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OPINION

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Disquieting

THE DECISION of the Supreme Court to hand down a compulsory restraining order suspending the expanded VAT law, has taken a toll on the economy. The peso has been shaken, as have the stock and bond markets. This has been a blow to the administration's efforts to bring about fiscal reforms. As a result, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima has led an effort to effect a speedy resolution of the issue before the Court. The country cannot afford a re-

EDITORIAL

versal reversal of its fiscal reforms at this time.

Be that as it may, it is a cause for the gravest concern that suspicions that the Arroyo administration itself penned for the issuance of the TRO have not only been entertained, but actually believed. That the administration could be considered capable of sabotaging one of the centerpieces of its economic reform program, in order to secure a breather from the unpopularity of the measure, indicates the low regard into which it has fallen and not only as far as the usual sectors critical of all its actions but also the business and other sectors.

To support the administration's choosing political expediency over the long-term fiscal health and credibility of the country is not only an indictment of a problem of confidence. To think that the Palace is capable of such a thing is also to assume the Supreme Court is susceptible to pressure—a grave slander not only on the President and her economic team but also on the Supreme Court. And yet, we cannot entirely blame who entertained such suspicions because even Purisima was said to have told the President during last Friday's Cabinet meeting that he hoped the TRO was not a Palace move.

Purisima's actions last Monday should show that whether his initial suspicions were accurately reported or not, he feels confident that he has the backing of the President as he tries to put the new VAT law back on track. Suspicions of the administration playing fast and free with the economic prospects of the nation should, above all, be easily countered by the fact that it was the opposition that petitioned the Supreme Court to declare the law unconstitutional. Occam's Razor, the logical principle that the simplest explanation is most likely the best, suggests that the Court did what it was asked to do by the parties opposing the law.

However, now that the Supreme Court has entertained objections, and its actions have in turn been appealed by the finance secretary, it is incumbent upon the Court to act judiciously, yet swiftly. During those politically turbulent and economically perilous times, the country cannot afford to have a judicial Damocles' sword hanging over its head. The country deserves to know at the earliest possible time, whether the VAT law is constitutional or not, because the government cannot afford to be left in a legal limbo while economic pressures continue to mount.

The law was a politically unpopular consequence of past fiscal decisions of this administration and those that came before it. It is ensconced in a very painful measure which is intended to accomplish a necessary end, which is to help narrow, if not eliminate, the budget deficit as well as keep in check its mounting debt. As it is, the actions of the petitioners asking the Court to intervene have had very real consequences in terms of dampening foreign investor confidence and damaging the country's standing in the eyes of foreign fund managers and credit rating agencies. If the administration is to face the possibility of reversal by the Court on this issue, then it needs a chance to attempt remedial measures as soon as possible. If, however, the law stands constitutional, creating then it also deserves to move ahead with its fiscal measures, now already made more difficult by the Court's freeze order.

After initially being poised to enjoy a honeymoon with foreign fund managers and investors, the administration has now experienced yet another setback. While those who oppose the law may have increased their popularity at home, they have harmed the country not even brownie points abroad. Either way, it is the public that is losing.

If the Palace unscrupulously torpedoed its own law, this sends a chilling message to the President's economic team and the entire country. If opposition to the law was calculated to ponder it to the public, then it was irresponsible and cynical. Either way, the public is suffering.

IT expert shows how cheating was done

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IN THE JUNE 20 column, we wrote here: "There is one easy, sure, simple and acceptable way to disprove the charge that President Macapagal-Arroyo cheated in the 2004 elections. And that is to open the ballot boxes, beginning with those in the places where she placed in the lupon. If the recount shows that GMA won fair and square," it would prove she did not cheat even if those conversations [in the wiretapped tapes] did take place.

"If I were GMA and Garcillano, I did not cheat, I would ask the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) to recount the votes in those places to remove any doubt as to my victory. But if I know that I cheated in my people, thanked for me, why I would open every canvas, fair or foul, to prove my ability to recount."

Last Monday, Malacañang proposed as independent commission to do this recount. Does that indicate that GMA is confident the recount would not reveal any cheating? Perhaps. It might be a consolation that Garcillano, who was appointed by the President would not be available. It has to be the PET.

At last Monday's baptism in Manila where the panelists where Senate Minority Leader Francis Escudero, Rep. Edcel Lagman and information technology expert Rebecca Abesia, I asked them if the opposition would join the administration in petitioning the PET to reopen the electoral canvas in selected places. Escudero replied that he is willing to, but that what they were asking during the canvassing of the certificates of canvass (COCs) by Congress but the majority members stubbornly refused, dismissing their every motion with the cry "Noted," he said. That was also their response to the Hello Garci tapes, which were not dismissed by the PET. He expressed doubt, however, whether the PET would allow it since the President and Vice President have already been proclaimed.

Lagman said, however, that there is no precedent for such a situation and that such a recount may be an option that the PET, which is composed of Supreme Court justices, may agree to since it would solve the present crisis that threatens to close the nation into chaos. Indeed, I think the justices should not be so technical but should exercise good sense and statesmanship and agree to such a petition since both sides want it anyway.

Malacañang has a sensible proposal. So lawyers from either side at the recount. Lawyers will only delay the proceedings by their constant objections and debates. But this is one case where speed is imperative. The faster the recount is finished, the better.

So if the administration and the opposition sincerely want a recount, then there is no reason for them to prevent votes. The two sides should prepare the petition to the PET immediately.

* * *

Reopening the ballot boxes would also show whether the third panelist at Mendoza's forum is right or wrong. Roberto Verzola, an IT expert and former Stanford volunteer, showed in a PowerPoint presentation how the cheating was done. The way he explained it, it was quite easy and simple. But to me (and, I would, which was accredited by the Comelec to be the citizen's arm to monitor the elections and counting to prevent cheating, seems to be a part of the conspiracy, Verzola said. But the whole theory, he quickly added, but only some of its officials.

In brief, it was as simple as counting the votes from GMA Inalbarrado Junior to establish a trend. Then Stanford swapped its tabulation which cost $1,500 percent of the votes for Senator Noynoy Aquino and GMA was given the Stanford and Comelec results. By stopping the tabulation at that point, it was ready to appear that GMA had won. Then, when the official Comelec count, based on election returns, was completed, with GMA ahead of PD by 1.1 million votes, it could not be compared with Stanford's count because Stanford, whose count was based on the more reliable election returns, had stopped counting.

Verzola compared the official Comelec (Namfrel) count with unofficial Stanford tallies. The Comelec tally is considered complete with 32.2 million votes counted. GMA's lead over PD is 1.1 million votes, 3.44 percent of total votes.

The Stanford tally is only 81.98 complete with 26.4 million votes counted. GMA's lead over PD is only 880,022 votes, or 3.39 percent of total votes. When Stanford stopped counting, there were still 6.1 million uncounted votes. Assuming the percentage share of each candidate in the unvalued votes, then PD edged GMA by around 359,466 to 399,456 votes. Combining this with GMA's earlier lead of 3.39, 0.98 percent, or either GMA ahead of at most 136,118 votes or an PD win of at most 63,484 votes. It was a very close fight, Verzola said. Either candidate could have won.

These results suggest, Verzola said, that "it was PD's 1.1 million lead that very partly lead to cheating by 1 to 1.2 million votes."

"If we accept that Stanford's 81% hand tally is closer to the truth," Verzola added, "then widespread cheating occurred in Mindanao, changing the Mindanao winner from PD to GMA."

The computations showed that in provinces where GMA lost to the Stanford tally, she won in the Comelec tally. For example, she lost by 19.2 percent to the ARMM per Stanford but won by 21.3 percent per Comelec tally, a discrepancy of 50.5 percent. In the whole of Mindanao, she lost by 1.5 percent per Stanford but won by 8.6 percent per Comelec, in a discrepancy of 8.4 percent.

Per Stanford's count, PD won in four of the six regions of Mindanao, and in 9 of 14 regions nationwide, but this was totally reversed in the Comelec count where GMA won in four of six regions in Mindanao and in 9 and 16 regions nationwide.

Isn't it fraudulent?

Abad lesson

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

AMID the fracas over Cabinet resignations and apology last Monday I had only token effect of value, Education Secretary Florencio Abad said it did: it gave a lesson in humility that would soon be propagated in schools. "I guess the important lessons we can draw here is, if you make a mistake, you own up to the matter," he said. "That's a good lesson for our students, especially coming from the highest official of the land."

Indeed, Abad said, the President did not just stop apologizing for her mistake. "By way of penance, she did not just own up to a lapse in judgment but promised to do things to restore public trust and confidence in her leadership as well as to her administration." The lessons in humility will be incorporated in classroom discussions in public schools. "One of the things the President has emphasized, and which we have allocated several subjects for, is values formation in elementary and high school."

What can I say? I learn by only one hide.

I used to like Erich Abad. I delivered him during Leonor Aquino's time when he was appointed by the Commission on Appointments by being "blamed." Talk of lessons, this is one country whose leaders teach the most wrong things to their people. Can anything be more perverse than finding the secretary of agrarian reform unfit for his job because he is pro-farmer? It was the same thing with Bobby Sanchez' ouster. Sorry for my Labor secretary under pressure from business, because he was pro-labor. Abad was rejected on less than seven times by the hardliner-controlled Commission on Appointments.

Clearly, the lesson he got from this is that if you can't lick 'em, join 'em, and he has since been going rather than hiding inquiry. The same thing was unfortunately happened to my friend Nene Pimentel who, after being victimized in 1995 by Juan Ponce Enrile who manufactured the petition that led to a shotgun boxing, decided to go for the winner. Sorry, and friend himself sharing the same cage with his tormentor—Enrile also ran under Erap. Abad and Pimentel gained much political clout and for much material too. Now there's a very good lesson about the true essence of winning and losing. Or about gaining the world and losing a soul.

I myself love always asked what we were teaching the kids by keeping GMA in power. But now I see that the situation necessary actually pose to make GMA worthy of emulation by elementary and high school kids. It is, after all, breath mercy. There are lessons to be learned from GMA's apology, but none of them is of the kind that should be taught in public schools. Those who also serve as protectors of the vote, are likely to approve of. What lessons are those?

One, never admit to a crime unless you are forced to. For weeks, Malacañang tried to deceive the public by saying variously that the tape was doctored, that GMA was the person on the tape but she was talking not to a Comelec official but to a local official, that we don't really know who was in the tape at all. Ignacio Bunye would have earnest his admission that it was GMA on the tape, saying he wasn't really sure, but tape was not the original. Four suppositories, he said, he couldn't recognize his own voice from a copy of a copy. He forgot that he wasn't dealing with a cassette tape but with a CD and that, as every high school kid knows, learning does not depend on audio file but producers an exact clone. Which is a good lesson about knowing what you are talking about before you open your mouth.

The bigger lesson, of course, is that if you are a student and you discovered your true calling to get a scholarship, never admit to it even after being found out. Unless you can no longer hold one.

Two, after you admit a crime, make sure that you yourself prescribe your own punishment. What did GMA propose after she admitted to committing the most possible crime of a presidency, which was to call up a Comelec official while he was busy counting votes? "I want to close the chapter and move on with the business of governing." The President has now found to a crime, notwithstanding that she calls it "a lapse in judgment," but it is not up to the people she wronged to prescribe her punishment, it is up to her.

So now, if you are found to have doctored your transcripts to get a scholarship, all you have to do to apologize to school officials, demand that they stop their humiliation in open, and promise that you will be a better student. And say, "I want to close the chapter and move on with the business of studying."

There, if you have committed a heinous crime, propose a punishment that is not only disproportionate to the crime but is actually the crime completely. By way of penance. Abad says, GMA promises to be a better leader. But what is the crime? The crime is that she has no right to be the leader of this country to the first place. The crime is that she stole this country's leadership by cheating in the elections. The correct penance for that is not assuming or being a usurper! The correct penance for that is not doing crime...with or without the company of her spouse—as Mrs. Macapagal. The correct penance for that is upholding the lie with the pretense to change?

So now, if you're admitted to cheating your way to a scholarship, you don't need to give it up, least of all to the babysitter's kid whose parents you took by cheating to be intelligent. You don't need to give up being a student at all. Just stop being the living embodiment of all that the school abhors. All you have to do is promise to do things to restore the school's trust and confidence in you by being a scholar as well as a student. And you'll be just up as a paragon of virtue, an ideal for values formation.

Ah, but life aloud, sir, don't you think that is such a cruel lesson?

Rosales does a political balancing act

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

STEPPING into the vacuum left by the late Jaime Cardinal Sin, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales has assumed the mantle as leader of the premier archdiocese in the Catholic Church hierarchy in the Philippines. He has tried to steer the Church away from reactionary and tyrannical political activism in the midst of turbulent events that led to the ousting by people power in 1986 of President Ferdinand Marcos.

In a pastoral letter read in all of Manila's churches for publication on July 3 and read in parishes all over the country last July 3, Rosales broke his silence on the political crisis that came to its climax in the middle of June in the siege of Senate, and called on the faithful to take the middle ground of political moderation and reconciliation. The message represented a push to bring into sync for the Church which has been divided by the crisis over the charges of corruption in the Arroyo administration. The Church hierarchy is much the same instance as it is found the political opportunities and other groups, which have sought to cut short the term of the President, without resorting to bloody.

The pastoral letter's most significant feature is "fundamental principles that should govern our search for solutions to our present crisis." It is to be avoided by confused short-term measures.

"First, let us remember that the offended cannot simply be controlled by expressions of regret, repentance and apology. The offended party, justice, too, should think the search for truth, justice must be persistent demands more than an apology and those who seek forgiveness should be ready to be called to accountability."

That point refers to the President's apology that she made a "lapse in judgment" in talking over the telephone to an official of the Commission on Elections regarding the election results in certain localities. The letter suggests that the archbishop did not find the apology sufficient to defuse the crisis and that she committed very bad to be taken to task.

an instinctive silence that Filipinos can be held accountable for her unfortunate at the electoral process.

The second point struck a message that the Church abhors the idea of resolving the crisis through extra-constitutional means. "The pursuit of truth regarding the grave doubts put upon the fairness and officials should be conducted within the parameters of our Constitution and should support the integrity of the final," the letter said. "Any pronouncement that disregards our constitutional and legal safeguards weakens our institutions and paves the way for a power installer that can cause more profound suffering of our people."

The third point emphatically rejected violence as a means for attaining these ends. "Let us be very clear: even in those difficult moments from all the different political parties, who have the economy's basic bearings to their institutions."

The moderate position taken by the archbishop sought to strike a balance to the Church's position at a time when contending factions in the hierarchy have sought to hijack the Church's direction. A group of radicalized bishops have been trying to bring it into a position of alignment and anti-movements, seeking another people power revolution to oust the duly-elected government.

The pastoral letter was a disappointment to a group of bishops who have good reasons to be pressing ahead. She—in particular, pressing—to engage in political action and join the chorus of regime opponents. If they expected the archbishop to endorse their activities, the letter clearly repudiated that role. No letter studied the key ecumenical movement of the archbishop of Manila, the most influential spiritual leader of the Church in the Philippines, to follow the political decisions of his predecessor, differentiating it from that of his.

The current political crisis provided the occasion in which Rosales could distance his position from the issues of the pastoral letter to indicate that he would not commit to call for the moderation of the Church's political role. The voice of the lower echelons than the archbishop has assisted the temptation to follow in the footsteps of his and that he is moving the Church away from the old, avowedly interventionist model on to the cardinal.

Besides, through the pastoral letter, has won a clear signal to lower bishops that he is not a donor of his and that he is distinguishing the Church from any hand-in-glove relations in secular politics.

Rosales' decision to assume the pastoral in the early years of the Church came in the midst of the confusion about its role in the crisis, stemming from the fact that, following the eruption of the scandals over money and the tapped conversations, a number of outspoken bishops have expressed different positions on the crisis.

The pastoral letter marked an attempt by the archbishop of Manila not only to tamp his enthusiasm and leadership on the hierarchy but also to give the Church's single authoritative voice in a time characterized by many of voices.

Not just the problem

AT LARGE

Nona Limocon-David

TODAY... Perhaps the most visible, if not reliable, group of participants in the Senate's investigations of the corruption charges against the Arroyo administration, transvestites, male and female sex workers and their who have set with men. They pop up in the corridors, dining rooms and meeting areas of the Bulwagang Senador. Lenten rose and Senate security personnel, who are trying to fully make up and spotting cocktails orgy, on their way to mounting a daily lunchtime show, adding sparkle to an already dreary and monotonous proceedings in the computerized and monitor.

Not to be outdone, the Senate's own transgender group, a common republic. But interest in their constituency are now beginning to annex the determination among themselves. Those who have ties to

Key to making pupils really read

DECLINING news readership, as observed by Belinda A. Aquino in her column (PDI 6/5/05), is a testament of this kind of teaching done in the primary and secondary levels. Basically, all subjects are reading subjects. The poor grades in English, Math and Science can be attributed, therefore, to the poor reading ability of the student due to the ineffective way reading is taught.

One must know the nature of reading to teach pupils to read effectively. Reading is expressed in two related concepts: (1) reading is a series of complex processes involving a variety of activities; (2) the reading performance of the individual is influenced by personal factors—physical, educational, social and moral.

The crux of reading is expressed in the first concept. The series is made up of (1) recognition, (2) comprehension, (3) maximum and (4) integration. When these four reading skills or components are fully covered in the reading, good readership is attained.

Let me illustrate by using this line from the lecture: "Who can argue against P20 billion profit?"

If this line is flashed to anyone to be read and it is indeed read, it can be said that the one who read it can recognize the printed jargon. This is the initial skill or reading dimension. Good readership does not end here. It should move on to the next dimension.

Comprehension. This means the ability to read aloud, between and before the lines. It involves students' the ability to draw meanings from the sentence. When ideas, information or steam do not be inferred from the sentences?

In the example, the following can be drawn: the President does not like to dismiss the present managers she a politically indebted to; their dismissal might be brought out if the manager is removed from office. These ideas are gained through comprehension. From here, the reading skill should proceed to the third dimension—reaction.

Reaction follows easily if comprehension is developed. It may take the form of rejecting, accepting or believing the idea, implied or expressed, to be true, feasible or applicable to one's daily life.

The fourth and last skill or dimension is integrating the meaning of the selection into one's behavior, attitudes or thinking. This series of complex mental processes should be fully developed so product good readers. Aside from the materials used, personal factors such as health, mental, emotional and social should be considered.

If effective readers could be produced by diligently observing the nature of reading in studying, the educational standard in the school could be improved. The teacher is the key to this. Books, chalks, good rooms and complete school facilities all contribute to make the environment conducive to learning, but only the teacher can provide the needed stimulus to make the pupil react and respond. One learns by doing.

—FERMIN G. OBIDOS,
president,
Agoo Senior Citizens Association, Senior Citizens Center, 42nd Park Compound, Agoo, La Union 2504

LETTERS

Rome lost to vices

YES should not be legalized. It is a source of all evil.

The Philippine Country Sweepunder Diffao was created by the government to support charitable institutions like the Quezon Institute, to suppress the deadly disease, tuberculosis, which affected President Manuel L. Quezon. The casinos and other forms of vices should not have been approved. Many families have been broken because of gambling.

I congratulate my former student, Archbishop Oscar Cruz for his courage in leading to resolution lacking, although it is part of the Filipino culture. As former Education Secretary Alejandro M. Roces said, Filipinos will only engage in games of chance in cockfighting some basketball but their manners more than their wives.

Children must with cards and mahjong tiles. The common expression in the Philippines is "pasa-loto ayos din sa buo."

Gambling is a form of vice. When one loses in gambling, he will give his shirt away. Some fall because of vices.

—CL DR., JULIAN
M. ROLDAN, 89 (ret.),
92 New York St. Cubao, QC

Snap elections not the answer

SNAP elections, as suggested by Conrado de Quiros (PDI, 6/14/05), may seem to provide the answer to the question from the likes of Bayi Progress Inquirer, who think that both the call and this senator's the President Macapagal decrees. The fact is—we don't need proof beyond reasonable doubt here—obvious. Philippine style, goes to all the presidents (and local officials, not we did not deserve—from Marcos (I can't speak of those before him because I wasn't born) down to GMA.

I say this from the standpoint of ordinary followers (like me) who were built in passivity, given to poverty and, if this electoral system gives us again no option between two wrong presidents, will surely die in poverty. For the likes of me who are from the so-called grass-roots, the issue is far more than whether GMA cheated or not, cheating between her and FPJ, or even whether the ensuing mess between the two presidents is over political system better is the issue about whether a president is a thieves' platform or a movie actor.

The issue is whether or not a leader can effectively come up with policies that will elevate our standard of living to a decent level, that can stop the exodus of breadwinners to other countries, that can lead to building good roads, highways and bridges whose quality is on par with those of the superhighways in the United States that can bring back peace and order on the cities of every family, that can make the judicial system in getting a government job, that can give decent homes to everybody to much the same way that the U.S. government today makes its own. In short "bread for the people," that can be, or better, equitably) social ing of government money and properties; and, not the least, that can stop cheating in elections.

Again, I don't think these concerns from the standpoint of ordinary Filipinos who are content with our being followers, who have no ambitions of ever assuming political power, who will never lead, or even want to be followers?

I don't want to argue with those who think there's nobody else who can replace GMA as President, or who say that we're just begging the building of snap elections, or with those who are interpreting people power.

Snap elections, people power and the constitutional buckets of the whole thrust

Across the NATION

ROUNDUP

MILF attack hurts 2 teens

CAMP EVORA—Major Ibrahim ... The military said Marco Polo Plaza Hotel in Cebu City ... Statue prayed for ... Council feud ... World mayor nominee ... Councilor's mom slain ... BSP exec killed ... Trader shot dead ... Dolondon tops in fair ... College conversion endorsed ... 1,000 mahoganies planted ...

Bacolod priests await CBCP decision on 'Gloriagate' tape

IF THE SHOE FITS
A man dashing past dress made in Boracay roam the streets of Davao City

BACOLOD CITY—Priests of this city's diocese are divided over whether or not to support calls for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign, a reflection of the Church's rank-and-file ...

The priests have decided to just wait instead ... Bishop Antonio Tobias ... Fr. Antonio Bumanlag, head of the Social Action Center of the Bacolod diocese, said the 30 priests who met on Monday had reached ... Bumanlag said the priests ... Bishop Tobias ... Fr. Bumanlag ... Mr. Arroyo had admitted calling up an election official during the canvassing of votes in the May 2004 presidential ... Prosecutors also ... Robbers try to blow up police station in Baguio ... Cops arrest members of private army run by ex-councilor ... Macapagal surname surfaces in fraudulent expropriation ...

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jon Bundoyo
News Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Gov't scored for ignoring Metro, C. Luzon sinking

By Tarcisio Crespo
City of San Fernando

THE GOVERNMENT has yet to stop the excessive use of groundwater, the main cause of the rapid sinking of coastal plains of four Metro Manila cities and three Central Luzon provinces, according to two geologists.

Dr. Edwin Rodolfo and Dr. Bernardo Tiongson, both of the Mineral Sciences of the University of the Philippines, said they alerted local and national officials about the problem four years ago.

They said areas south of the Manila Bay—Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela (Commonly called as Metro Manila and Pampanga, Bulacan and Bataan in Central Luzon—are sinking at rates more than 30 times faster than the rate of recent.

Global warming causes oceans to rise at 2 millimeters yearly, while subsidence in the southern Manila Bay villages was occurring at rates of 1.7 to 6 from time to time, they said.

"Both right now (recently, which is begun in 1997), we observed that the mining has led to worsening floods and tidal incursions in natural communities as deltas."

Rodolfo is also a professorial emeritus of the department of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois.

In the latest paper they wrote on the problem, Rodolfo and Tiongson observed that officials were "reluctant to accept outside findings... even though these issues have been independently verified by geodetic data collected by the government's own Department of Public Works and Highways."

The paper is titled "Public and governmental reluctance to incorporate unpleasant subsidence a major anthropogenic cause for worsening floods around southern Manila Bay, Philippines."

Selective

The DPWH, Rodolfo and Tiongson said, now "take very selective actions to how it applies the subsidence evidence, either unreasonably to inquisitions or ignoring it altogether."

In their statements, government efforts "have short-term profitable contingency over efficacy."

"Local politicians build seawalls to court votes. Wealthy and politically connected fishpond owners, in addition to hindering drainage by illegally encroaching on estuaries, are major users of groundwaters and do not allow anywhere near of their pumpings," they said.

The government also pursues "expensive but ineffective dredging and flood-control projects funded with foreign loans [that] are vulnerable to corruption."

Government engineers and foreign engineering consultants, on the other hand, "ignore, deny or minimize the implications of their own geodetic results/notices of rapid subsidences."

The areas in which subsidence is taking place as a whole, spanning 2,000 square kilometers.

Plan and very near the sea level, their mapping of the subsidence zones exceeds 10 to 20 km inland. Southwest monsoon winds (habagat) and typhoons cause a maximum of 4,000 mm of rains from May to October. The winds raise tide levels, stopping flood waters from draining to the bay.

While the Manila Bay delta areas have been naturally subsiding at rates similar to two deltas in Italy and the United States, the recent increase has been hastened by the pumping out of groundwater, which causes the land surface to sink, Rodolfo and Tiongson said.

"Every coastal metropolis in the world where groundwater has been withdrawn at rates greater than recharge experiences serious subsidence," they said, citing the case of seven deltas other than those dealt with as sinking.

In the southern Manila Bay area, groundwater is obtained for fishponds, plantations and recreational facilities, such as golf courses and swimming pools.

They cited the need for government assistance in measuring subsidence in illegally built fishponds, saying they were met there by private armies.

"In the meantime, we can only speculate that fishpond pumps may cause as much land subsidence as it does in the Yen-Lin area of Taiwan, where extensive fishponds are so much ground water that they have caused the land to subside 0.80 m from 1959 to 1997. This equates to an average rate of 0.2 cm yearly, either considerable or significant, should it equal to the 0.3 cm/year observed by us at fishpond sites in Bulacan," they said.

Floodwaters rose by 1.2 meters in Malabon and the Caloocan area and 0.3 meter in Navotas and Pampanga from 1991 to 2002. Tide levels were up by as much as the same height in those 11 years, and took a day to ebb.

A SCAVENGER carries scrap materials as he crosses a flooded street in Malabon after yesterday's heavy downpour. AFP PHOTO

AMRSP JOINT BOARD STATEMENT

"...your faithful ones pray to you in time of distress..." (Psalm 32: 6)

Once again, our battered country is rocked by political turbulence and crisis. In this situation of confusion and unrest, we, the Joint Executive Board of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP), wish to share with our members and all people of good will our discernment of problems and principles to guide our responses search for truth and justice.

We believe that any solution to our present crisis must be governed by the Constitution and the laws of our land, for the sake of the future of our country and the good of our people. We reject any solution that involves violence.

We call for accountability to the nation on the part of the President. We find her admitted phone conversation with a Comelec Official reprehensible and unworthy of the Office of the President. We don't consider it a mere lapse of judgment especially given the content and the frequency. This goes deeper and casts a shadow on one's personal integrity. An apology is not enough. Our people have a right to know the full truth. To this end, we support the creation of a constitutional and independent body, composed of women and men of proven integrity, who will swiftly and impartially determine for the nation the authenticity and true meaning of the tapes. If injustice has been done, appropriate reparation must be demanded of its perpetrators.

We believe that there is a need for rebuilding of everyone's attention on what really matters: the *plight* of our people, especially the poor. We therefore call for speedy and authentic reforms, especially for the sake of impunity of our people who suffer from the lack of food, clothing, shelter and education. Alleviating the plight of the poor, of those who suffer especially during these hard times of increasing costs of energy, high prices of basic necessities and massive unemployment must be given priority issues that affect the lives of the poor, such as the foreign debt, the destruction of the environment caused by logging and mining, land reform program delayed and denied, high prices and low wages, must be seriously considered. Violations of human rights such as summary killings and intimidation must be decisively addressed. Government and its institutions, such as the COMELEC, the Cabinet, and other government agencies and corporations must be quickly purged of corrupt elements.

In a situation of confusion and heated emotions, we call on our members and all people of good will to remain sober, vigilant, and carefully discerning. We join our sisters and brothers in the Church, bishops, religious and lay people in calling for prayer, discernment and in keeping alive the spirit of hope in this seemingly hopeless situation. We believe that these troubled times call most of all for prayer and discernment. We need to beg for God's help, for the light God alone can give us, so that we can find solutions that will truly be for the lasting good of our people, especially the poor. The times too, call for penance and conversion. For each of us, is, in a sense, a part of the problem, as well as part of the solution to the ills of our country.

Because of this, we invite all our members and brothers and sisters to make July 7 - the 113rd anniversary of the founding of the Tañpuan – and July 16 - the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - special days of prayer and fasting in our communities for a true discernment towards truth, justice and peace. We are convinced that, if we turn to our loving God, we shall find the light, strength, and hope we need, to move forward again as a people, to help create the future that this good and gracious God so desires for our suffering people.

July 5, 2005

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Nonformal education reaches hinterlands

By Delmar Cortez
Inquirer Bulletin

BASIC education continues to elude the Cordillera's remote upland communities due to poverty and geography, but the Department of Education is trying its best to bring alternative education to these hinterlands.

The remote villages where no schools exist include Apca and Bonacao in San Isidro and Zumigui, and tribal cultural communities in Mount Willis, all in Lamut town in Ifugao.

Through these so-called "alternative learning systems," the region's education officials have given the task of fighting illiteracy in the remote areas to models (teachers who work 20-20 km to reach their places of assignment.

Dr. Agapito Ordinario and Dr. Elmer Bilgos, of nonformal supervisors of the DepEd region 2 office in Benguet, said the Cordillera has 27 mobile teachers who reside at least 40 hours a week of instructional teaching.

The teachers walk through mountains and forests to reach children and adults and teach them basic math, reading and communication, Delmar said.

He said the teachers tend to visit even the region's five farthest hinterlands—Tinglayan in Kalinga, Sadanga in Mt. Province, Tinoc in Ifugao, Kibungan in Benguet, Tkong in Abra, and Calanasan in Apayao.

Bilgos said the absence of schools in the remote villages had contributed to create a dent in the achievement of a 1.86 percent literacy level in both elementary and secondary education in the region.

Delmar said the DepEd is confident education had been institutionalized and remained "alternative learning systems" to become more adaptable to the learning environment in the remote areas.

"The pedagogy (teaching method) used is community-based where basic and functional literacy are taught in the phonetic language using indigenous materials," he said. Teaching language includes the use of the vernacular so the teachers could communicate better with the students.

To help the mobile teachers here, Delmar said they brought 56 power-fed sets of literacy modules prepared by the DepEd.

The modules must complete 200 hours of basic literacy and 500 hours of "arithmetic and required basic learning" over the five strands of the alternative learning system—communication skills, problem solving and critical thinking, sustainable use of resources or projects, development of self-confidence and sense of community, and expanding one's world vision.

Since the approach is contextual, the subject areas are taught using practical approaches that reflect the daily life of the people in the community, Delmar said.

Flower portraits connect people to Dot's life

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Southern Luzon

FARMAKEER. Bonny Barnes reluctantly very much to do a movie about amateur milfs. He artist Pax Steinfeld. "Dot" Steinfeld-Mirkwood because her life story is so rich in texture that would overdose soap opera addicts.

Born to a rich Swedish City family, Dot left it all to be with Miguel Mirkwood, a Baguio City pauper boy.

Dot refuses to relate that chapter of her life publicly, but she remembered living a happy, if underprivileged, life, until the boy Joshua, who suffers from a combination of congenital diseases that affect his bones, kidneys and spine.

When a 17-year-old man with the mind of an 8-year-old, Joshua hardly talks because of a child palsy that was only recently corrected. He stopped school when doctors realized his curiosity session could not deal with a crowded environment such as classrooms.

Both parents struggled to get their son medical attention, while sacrificing their other boys, but their tragedies seemed to multiply.

Dot began to meander the dour crippling agony of motorcycles. But there were no good riders. They led their hearts to Hamster Joshua's medical bills.

"Nothing was left. Even my husband lost his shoes," Dot said.

She maintains a small house on Gibraltar Road in Baguio, near Wright Park where many lived and died. Some, although dozens have given her a 200-square-meter lot where her sons raised a hen-like home.

Seniors had telephoned Dot about securing her like styles. After he shrugged on one of the published news articles about Joshua's struggles, Dot decided this of her.

But when Miguel died, from a heart attack in 1994, Dot realized that she had nothing left to offer her children, except for an aunt and some grandmothers, consumers of a child abused by neglect.

In the beleaguered mother decided to make the breaders pay her way.

Dot had been cooking rice and sushi to hand-conversion hall of her garden to sell and raise funds for Joshua's continuing medical needs.

She finished her first 30 portraits of Baguio connect flowers, Baguio's lovers and tulip Dutch lovers in two months, feeling that her artistic hands would never fail her.

Those paintings are now on display at the Manila home of a friend named Ophie, awaiting a chance to go on exhibit.

Should an exhibit be possible, the curator will find paintings that reveal Dot's desperate need for miracles.

Heavy ochre bright shades of gold emanate her landscape of Baguio and childhood memories of Barefoot downtimes, and parents color her flowers. Her horses are ghostly apparitions, taking form a Baguio native that carves stalled.

On days when her back pains stab too deep, Dot paints in bed.

Her canvas propped from one side, Dot just finished a portrait of a palm she used to own. At one point in 2004, she completed two paintings too simple days.

"Sometimes, I feel so much pain, because we spend too much time of tending to Joshua, we may have neglected our other children," Dot said.

Michael (my eldest) works as [illegible] restaurant), while Heidi stayed in a center in Bolinao. Asher Byron (JR) has conquered his father's inside coming out on three horses," she said.

The paintings have restored "my dignity because for the first time, I was offering something to donors that comes from my soul," she said.

So That The Public May Know

On Saturday 17 July and Monday 18 July, some major publications gave wide publicity to a complaint of fraud filed by GSIS President Winston Garcia with the Securities and Exchange Commission against certain EPCIBank directors. The following facts will clarify the issues raised by Mr. Garcia.

Putting Things in Perspective.

1. Amb. Roberto Romulo, in law and in fact, has all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications of an independent director. He has never been an officer or employee of EPCIBank or any of its subsidiaries or affiliates. Equitable Systems Management (ESM) is not a subsidiary or affiliate of the bank. Amb. Romulo's appointment as independent director has been confirmed by both the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

2. EPCIBank has made and continues to make donations to foundations or reinvestment organizations that espouse charitable, civic, and other noble causes. It believes that any foundation in honor of the late statesman Gen. Carlos P. Romulo is worthy of support. Nevertheless, neither EPCIBank or its subsidiaries and affiliates have made any donation of whatever amount and in whatever guise to the Romulo Foundation for Peace and Development or the Carlos Romulo Foundation, as Mr. Garcia has claimed in the media.

3. The Go family has not voted in their favor the Bank shares owned by ESC Investments. The nominees of the family to the Board of Directors of the Bank have been elected because of their shareholdings (25.2% of total shares) and the proxies voluntarily given by minority shareholders who have consistently given their support to the family since the Bank's founding by the family patriarch, Mr. Go Kim Pah. As a group, they are the single biggest private shareholder of the Bank.

4. ESC Investments, while an EPCIBank subsidiary, has the sole authority to determine how its EPCIBank shares shall be voted. The Board of Directors of the EPCIBank cannot direct the ESC Board of Directors on how to perform their functions, neither can they partition the shares as Mr. Garcia has demanded. This position is supported by independent opinions issued by four reputable law firms who are all experts in corporate law.

5. Equitable Bank Foundation is not owned by EPCIBank as claimed by Mr. Garcia. It used to be known as the Go Kim Pah Foundation, when it was established by the Go family in honor of the Bank's founder. The shares of the Foundation in EPCIBank came from the holding companies owned by the Go family.

6. GSIS was not disenfranchised in the regular stockholders' meeting in April last year. Two GSIS representatives were elected to the Board of Directors of the Bank. Three months later, one of its nominees resigned. Its nominee for replacement of the resigned director could not be admitted to the Board for lack of the proper qualifications. The Board then decided to constitute the position of a third independent director to further strengthen its good corporate governance program.

The record and performance of the Bank over the past few years testifies to its high standards of corporate governance. EPCIBank was adjudged Best Domestic Bank by The Asset, a prestigious regional financial publication in its 2004 Triple A Country Awards, and named as a 2005 Gold Inquirer Brand in the inaugural Readers Digest Trusted Brands survey. It posted a net income of P1.8 billion for 2004, a 38% increase in net income. It has paid out dividends in the amount of P436 million this year. Its shares have notably appreciated in value in the stock market over the past 12 months.

Theda T. Davila
RELO T. DAVILA
General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Equitable PCI Bank

Equitable PCI BANK
Your Bank of Choice

Garci: Yes, I talked ...

From page A1

target. So, their senator-in-waiting, Sen. Bongbong Marcos, is going to have to run on behalf of his father Sabsalon, an opposition senatorial candidate who lost in the election.

Before the election, Garcillano said, he also talked to then senatorial candidate Juan Ponce Enrile.

No favors

Garcillano said they did not ask favors from him and simply wanted their concerns about possible fraud.

"It'll the people that the conversations that have publicly come out of the tapes are no-ties," said Garcillano, speaking from an undisclosed place in Mindanao. "Many of those conversations were distorted," he said.

Garcillano specifically referred to a portion in the conversations in tapes released by the opposition purportedly showing that he was assuring Abalos of a one million vote margin.

"I did not say that. I categorically deny that," Garcillano said in his telephone call inside a House investigative panel room during the second session of the tape submitted by Alan Peguia, former counsel of deposed president Joseph Estrada.

He said he had been reluctant to come out, pointing out that only the flood of opposition prompting the recovery he had lost credibility before the public.

"The people are biased. I never did anything to destroy my image as an election. I am not that stupid," he said.

He said that the proper time he was willing to come out and confront his accusers.

House finally hears Paguia tapes

By Michael Lim Ubac

LAWYER. Alan Peguia yesterday sought to establish President Macapagal-Arroyo did not win last year's election in a manner that was fair and square as Malacañang had insisted.

Peguia was subjected to intense grilling by administration supporters at the joint investigation of the House committees but he stood by his belief that the controversial attempt by his possession showed a high-level conspiracy involving the President, the Commission on Elections and the military to rig the balloting.

His lawyer of deposed President Joseph Estrada told Quezon City Rep. Mayette Castelo Lazatin he was sure the source of Mr. Arroyo, Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, first nominated Sen. Miguel Arroyo, among other officials, were the ones in the recordings.

On Baguio Oriente Rep. Nestor Cayetano's query, Peguia said that although he did not have the chance to record the President's remarks in judgment committed by his device, they "can be classified" as treason.

He said the officials caught on the tape violated the Anti-Wire Tapping Act. The President, the Commission on Elections and the military are equally liable.

"The intention of a person is not important under the doctrine of malum prohibitum," said Peguia, who spoke mostly in Filipino.

At 6:49 p.m., when administration lawmakers finally ran out of questions, the two cassette tapes, each containing 90 minutes of conversations, were eventually played.

Peguia refused to identify the source of his tapes and confessed he could not determine whether they were originals because he was not an expert. But he said he was certain the voices on the tape were original.

Peguia noted that the 28 minutes 22 s, which he made out of the two tapes, was "selective only of the portions incriminating of the acts of the President and therefore designed to create suspicion in the minds of the public." Peguia said on the highest official in the land, Mr. Arroyo's conversations were most telling.

He did not agree with Dayo's observation that revealing the tapes' contents would "tarnish public confidence or outrage" and "have repercussions that could no longer be reversed."

"I would not bargain myself if I have been given a chance to reveal the truth to my countrymen but did not close," he said. He reiterated several times his sincere keenness of the confidentiality of client-lawyer relationship.

Told that the Supreme Court had suspended him indefinitely from practicing law for reputedly questioning the integrity of the justices during a hearing, Peguia said he was considering his motion "for reconsideration his motion "for free," and that he claim provided him the tapes for his "legal study."

Under questioning, Peguia said the shortest copy of the recordings was not spliced, false, tampered, mangled, altered and edited as claimed by administration lawmakers. He explained that he merely selected relevant conversations "but did not alter any of the conversations."

Responding to images del Rosa Rep. Robert Ace Barbers and other lawmakers on the specific insinuation that would support the controversial voice tapping, Peguia insisted that the use of the military in election is because Mr. Arroyo's cronies, the removal of unscrupulous generals and Mike Arroyo's office in gave P1.5 million to Garcillano so that his candidacies will win.

Cory, Rosales seek meeting with Noli

From page A1

That list, Aquino has stood by his lawyer amid mounting calls for her resignation and scheduled support from that she hasn't a position to serve power from the Arroyo administration, saying she was too old for "people power."

She visited Susan Roces, widow of the late senator and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., to remind her to stick to the Constitution after she joined calls for Mr. Arroyo's resignation.

Susan Roces factor

Earlier, Aquino also visited Roces to commend her for her solemn stance after meeting with former National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Sammy Ong who sought her assistance in the late Carlos Initiative with the "murder of all tapes."

Distance from ABS-CBN

Bolinao and Susan Roces Rep. Teddy Casiño said Dr. Cory's should prove himself capable of replacing President Arroyo.

And the best way to show the world that he isn't patient the country is to promptly dissociate himself from the influential Lopez clan who owns the media giant ABS-CBN, Bayantel, Meralco and Manila Electric Co. among other firms, they said.

Prior to the election to the country's second highest post last year, Dr. Cory had been wide ABS-CBN coverage, especially TV shows, "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" media, directed him to the owners and earned him the title, "Kabayan."

The two party-list lawmakers believed that the burden of proving his competence solely rested on his shoulders.

"Vice President Noli de Castro [should] show he is a worthy replacement as Chief Executive in a post-Arroyo period. He should also publicly distance himself from the Lopezes whom he served in ABS-CBN for many years. There is a fear that under a Jr. Cayetano presidency, the Lopezes will benefit from government favors," said Casiño.

Independent stance

Dr. Castro should also make known his independent stance on issues like taxes, prices of water and electricity, North Luzon Expressway toll fees and the public debt, they said.

"The people are no longer comfortable with mere cosmetic changes in leadership that maintain the status quo of corruption, immorality and anti-people programs. The first order of the day for Dr. Castro is to immediately dissociate himself from GMA who is now the subject of growing public rejection," said Casiño.

He said Dr. Castro should also join the clamor for Mr. Arroyo to resign from the presidency because she had lost her moral basis to govern and assist the nation.

Scare tactic

"They may be a tall order for Noli, but it is of paramount importance in order to ensure meaningful reforms in the post-Arroyo period," said Casiño.

Representative Pangasinan Junior and Bohinio Pacencio said House Minority Leader Francis Escudero's opinion that the possible successors of Dr. Castro to the presidency may be ing used as a scare tactic by the Arroyo administration was designed to create surprises between the President and her running mate.

"He is belittling the capacity of the Vice President who has been in public service, since his days as a media practitioner, longer than Representative Escudero has. The President specifically chose Noli as her vice president, confident in his capability as a public servant," Javier said.

The two congressmen said it was the opposition which supported the so-called "Solicomer."

Rule of succession

"We will maintain that the President's resignation is not a viable option. But we must always follow the rule of law and this means abiding by the rule of succession in the very remote possible scenario that the President does resign," Pacencio said.

Business interests

Bolinao also said "this country has had enough of leaders who based their platforms of governance on popularity and is easily manipulated by big business interests. Mr. De Castro must not be propelled to the helm being of a major media network and the same business group that runs this network."

"He cannot be expected to think of reforms that will have the poor, the masses, implemented especially if the scheme have to do with the nationalization of the electric power and water industries," Bolinao stressed.

He added that most Filipinos from listening Dr. Castro as a front runner to succeed President Arroyo in the event that she is forced out of office.

Enrile admits he also talked to poll execs

From page A8

Related developments on issue of wiretapped conversations

- PHILES: Secretary ignores threat to oust Malacañang bid to prohibit him and the majority of the senate in Congress. "The President has not committed any violation of law as to be ground therefor any impeachment"
- Roy Señeres, former Bataan Labor Relations Commission chair, said if the President had not done anything illegal, there was no reason why Garcillano should not continue with testifying. "He should let the truth and apologize," said Señeres.
- Malacañang party-list Representatives Mario Aguja and Loretta Ann Rosales said Garcillano might asked Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to investigate Mr. Arroyo for possible violations of the Constitution and various laws, instead

Congress.

Peguia has claimed his cassette tapes are the original wiretaps.

Samuel Ong, a former deputy chief of the National Bureau of Investigation, has also claimed he has the "number of all tapes" but he has disappointed some for much the announcement on June 28, hearing for his life. Ong's lawyers said the tapes would be under turned over to the House.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, appearing in yesterday's investigation, also denied ever copies of the wiretap which Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said had been delivered to his boss.

Mr. Arroyo has confirmed bits of the votes in the tape caught talking with an election official identified by the opposition as Virgilio Garcillano. She has said she cannot for the "hope to July 2004." Barcelino has denied he in the tape but the President is talking

Barcelona, Batino Javier and Florentino Ysasoc during the canvassing of votes.

Enrile said he called up Abalos during the canvassing when he heard there were "inexplicable" of the votes.

Count properly

"That was the time when they were pushing the cheating. I was down from Sto. Tiñio No. 33 and I said I heard that there were manipulations in the field. I don't mind losing but I do not want to be cheated again and so please count my votes properly," he recalled telling Abalos.

Enrile further revealed he also phoned Barcelona, Ysasoc and Javier because these appeared to be a "troubling" against the opposition candidates.

"I will not deny that I called. I call them whenever there's a problem when it comes to our but there's nothing wrong in calling a public official. They are not be-

yond the call of any citizen," he said.

"If I have violated any law I have proved against me but I haven't violated anything. I have not done any improper thing. I have not asked anybody to commit any violation of the law to perform any immoral conduct," Enrile said.

No influence

Enrile said he was just a private citizen who could not possibly influence anybody what he called up the Comelec officials.

When asked if his case was different from Mr. Arroyo, Enrile said: "I don't seem to judge other people." He said "it depends" on what was discussed during those calls.

"Now if there are other opposition senators and leaders caught on tape, I demand that all tapes of conversations of all the Commission on Elections officials be released publicly so that this issue can be put to an end," Enrile said.

Sen. Aquilino Madrigal, also a KBP candidate, is one of those mentioned in the text messages as having talked with Garcillano. "I don't even know him," Madrigal said in a phone interview with the bureau.

Administration Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said it was within the right of any candidate to call up Comelec officials if the candidate believes the election official is involved in manipulation.

But when asked if he called up Garcillano or any other official, Biazon said, "No comment."

Other administration senators, Juan Ponce and even Sen. Robert Benson, both administration senatorial candidates who battled with and took for the last slot, Mr. Arroyo said her husband are famed calling Garcillano to help them win.

Biazon said that if no one paid money to Mr. Arroyo's operatives and threatened to expose the fraud were dragging down Mr. Arroyo. With reports from **Christine O. Avendaño, Nelson F. Flores and Lala D. Salcedo-rio, AP**

GMA welcomes impeachment to rebut charges

From page A1

same day by Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, a member of Bampi, the President's newspaper.

Under the law on other impeachment complaint can be filed against a president for a year once initiated and has been endorsed by a member of the House.

Alvarez said Lagman's complaint could still be filed, although the complaint of Lagman had already been shattered, because the House has already adjourned and it had yet to be taken up by the House justice committee.

Nonpo said it was the view of the President that she did not commit anything wrong but because the case had been filed, "we might as well go ahead with it."

His lawyer would expect the house to vote with a statement a week ago that she made a "hope to judgment" by dismissing the complaint "with the election official.

But calls for her to quit have continued unabated, with two conservatives joining those who question whether she still has the moral author to re-lead.

Trap

The opposition slammed the filing of this second impeachment complaint, saying that the administration was again trying to prevent debate.

"The administration is employing tactics to ensure the President gets off the hook. They have again turned a deaf ear to what we've been asking—for them to stop railroading and to finally allow Leader Prospero Nograles to debate," said.

Besides his supposed testimony over the impeachment rumor, describing the complaint as flawed and a ruse that would give always the opportunity to save the sign.

Instead, the opposition has encouraged street protests opposite to the hope of persuading key sectors of society like the military, the Americans Roman Catholic Church and the middle classes to withdraw their support for Mrs Arroyo.

Mr Arroyo's allies have a majority in the prime committee and would vote to stop the complaint from going to the House plenary.

Should her allies lose any vote in committee, the complaint would go to the full House of Representatives, where a one-third vote would send the charges to the Senate for trial. There's no way by 15 minority legislators in the 226-member House of Representatives.

Alvarez said he endorsed the complaint so that the accusations against the President would be resolved through a legal process and not through anti-constitutional means.

"My endorsement does not mean that I'm taking up the cudgels for this complaint. I just want to provide a proper venue for this to be discussed," he said.

Alvarez said Lacuna, of Makati, Manila, was his friend and that the lawyer approached him on Monday for him to endorse the complaint.

In his 32-page resolution, Lacuna said the President's acts as shown in the "Hyatt tapes" amounted to breach of public trust, malfeasance and misfeasance.

He said his complaint must be signed by at least one-third of the chamber based done by the regime," Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes said.

Bayan also called on the organizations from the legal profession to help build a "solid case against the President."

"It would be good if the lawyers can also help in the drafting of the impeachment complaint so that the officials such as those who used his position, office in covering up the Hello Garci scandal," Reyes said.

Bayan aired a study by the lawyers' group Ibon which states that Mr. Arroyo and Bayan may have violated Presidential Decree No. 1829 on the obstruction of the arrest and prosecution of criminal offenders.

The law prohibits "preventing or using any record, document, paper or object with the knowledge of its falsity and with the intent to affect the course or outcome of the investigation or of a trial prosecution or conviction of another," the military group said.

Bayan said his demise allowed, if not ordered, Bunye to present two tampered CDs along with a certain Salgado to attack who him to and who the President Arroyo was talking to on the CDs. With reports from Norman Bordadora and AFP

Charter change to solve crisis

It's AWOL a violent end to the current political crisis, a sunking administration lawmakers yesterday proposed an "honorable exit" for Mr Arroyo through Charter change.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula said President Arroyo and Congress should immediately agree to vote Congress into a constituent assembly to change the basis of government from the present presidential system into a parliamentary and federal system.

Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, called on the President to make the "ultimate sacrifice" and give up the remainder of her term.

He said Mrs Arroyo could still remain in office but only until the election of new officials under the new system.

He also suggested that all to conform lawmakers, except Vice President Noli de Castro and the senators elected in the last elections, serve only up to Dec. 31, 2008. All elective officials would be disqualified to run in the elections to be held that year.

Jaraula said he made his proposal to avoid the extra-constitutional and violent proposals being suggested on how to unseat Mr Arroyo.

2 BEAUTICIANS IN MALPRACTICE SUIT

Botched breast job leads to arrest

By Magnaye C. Ortiz

COSMETIC surgery to the comfort of one's home may prove deadly.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) yesterday arrested two persons for illegally engaging in a cosmetic procedure that allegedly led to the death of one of their clients.

Joselino Castillo, 27, a call center agent, and his assistant Joy Aguilar, 22, conducted operations on an entrepreneur on Quezon Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila.

According to complainant Rosalito Aguilar Sr., his 21-year-old son Rosalito Jr. died of complications after undergoing three breast enhancement sessions with Castillo.

Aguilar said his son learned about breast enlargement through colleagues who were already identified only as Lara.

The young Aguilar then underwent breast enhancement sessions with Castillo in January and February.

Rosalito Jr., however, experienced complications on June 16 and died five days later at the De La Salle Medical Center in Dasmariñas, Cavite, Aguilar said.

"The doctor told us that people should only be given a maximum of 10 cc of collagen every six months," Aguilar said, stressing that an inexperienced Castillo had given his son 120 cc of collagen.

Aguilar then contacted Lara, who agreed to set up Castillo in an entrepreneur operation at his house on Tayuman Street.

Guilt-stricken

"Lara was apparently guilt-stricken because he felt that he had an indirect hand in his friend's death," the victim's father said, adding that Castillo's operation cost P150,000 each.

Aguilar said, "People interested in undergoing cosmetic surgery, like breast enhancement, should get it from licensed medical practitioners."

Castillo denied knowing the victim as he admitted that he was not licensed to conduct the cosmetic procedure.

"My clients call me to have their face or breasts improved," Castillo told reporters, saying that he first used Inoro to conduct collagen infusion from a certain Dorina Tolibas.

Castillo revealed that he bought collagen for P6,000 a bottle and accepted a minimum fee from his customers.

In an earlier Inquirer report, the Philippine Academy of Aesthetic Surgery Foundation and the Philippine Society for Cosmetic Surgery said that false doctors charged from P5,000 to P25,000 per session, which can be cheaper than legitimate standard cosmetic surgery.

A breast implant alone should cost between P50,000 and P60,000.

Combined with the anesthesiologist and hospitalization fees, breast augmentation can cost between P85,000 and P60,000, and even up to P100,000 in high-end hospitals.

Dr. Leonardo S. Abogado, former Boni president, said evil types were conspicuous matters that could cost as much as P15,000 per cc.

Charges of illegal practice of medicine will be filed against Castillo and Aguilar.

PUP teachers, students seek legit president

By Tina G. Santos

MEMBERS of the faculty, staff and student body of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) yesterday renewed calls for the appointment of a legitimate school president as they launched the "Justice for PUP Movement," a multisectoral organization fighting for reforms in the state university.

Over the past several years, PUP has been governed only by an acting president. Its last acting president rendered his irrevocable resignation last month.

The group urged the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to immediately resolve the issues concerning the installation of a legitimate president, saying the process conducted by the Search Committee for Presidency in 2003 must be reopened.

In 2003, PUP had three candidates, namely, Dr. Emilio Gonzalez, vice president for administration; Dr. Reynaldo Pia, a regular professor, and Dr. Orlando Molina, reportedly an "outsider" who came from the private sector.

The selection of a president then did not push through, reportedly because of the lack of a set of criteria approved by the Board of Regents. This prompted the three candidates to file a complaint against the board. The case is still pending before the Court of Appeals.

"We are upbeat we're now in the committee because this will only hamper the democratic process in the selection of a new legitimate PUP president," said student regent Ulysses Mead Dimerin. "Besides, retaking the process would take a while. It's just a matter of time and money, why don't they just choose among the three candidates?"

The Justice for PUP Movement is hoping that the installation of a new university president would resolve the school's various issues—including alleged rape cases inside the campus, graft and corruption, and favoritism in the promotion of rank and file employees and faculty members—which, it claimed, had been neglected by the past administration.

FX drivers ask on fare hike: How about us?

By DJ Yap

WEEKS after jeepney and buses were allowed to increase their fares, FX taxi drivers are crying out: How about us?

FX taxis or Asian Utility Vehicles (AUVs) still cannot charge higher fares, lamented two of these are "voluntary" or operating illegally according to an association of FX taxi drivers and operators.

Thus, ruling also underscored FX taxis is only not grossly more expensive, and sometimes even dumpier, than ranking jeepneys, said Mark Bonds, chair of the National Federation of AUV Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines.

Fourth said color-an FX drivers were willing to submit themselves to regulation, but the unregulated entry of taxi cabs licensed to them, were calling them "vanishing colorum (without group)."

FX taxis are licensed to operate like other cabs and service vehicles, but many drivers call charge each per passenger basis.

Finally, urged Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) Chairman Alberto Lim to make good her promise to legalize FX routes through the so-called MAY Express plan.

Legitimate lines

The plan seeks to eliminate illegal transport operators by providing legitimate FX taxis their own line of operation that would not directly compete with jeepneys and buses.

"FX drivers are no longer running money," said FX taxi driver Pandelo Calogoy of Bicol.

On the Metropolitan Cabbie route, jeepney charge P20, while colorum FX taxis charge P35, said Dondo. In Metro Manila, the maximum fare for jeepneys is P7.50, while for AUVs, it is P12 for the added.

In October last year, LTFRB required FX taxis to limit their passengers to five, and operate as regular taxis, a move strongly opposed by the operators.

At a press conference in Quezon City, the FX taxi drivers and operators expressed their opposition to the 10 percent expanded value-added tax, and demanded the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law.

They said they had had enough of the government's insensitive treatment of the transport people, warning that unless reforms were enacted, they would take take to the streets.

Malabon City solon alleges extortion at sea

A LAWMAKER from northern Metro Manila yesterday unveiled alleged rampant extortion and harassment against fishermen from Malabon and Navotas in waters off Cavite.

Malabon-Navotas Rep. Ricky Sandoval also questioned what he described as indiscriminate arrests of fishermen from his congressional district caught fishing in the municipal waters of the Bonifacio Espino province.

"I have appealed to the local government of Cavite to help stop the incessant arrests of some law-enforcers in the area, including the Maritime police and Bantay Dalampasigan police," Sandoval said.

According to Department of Environment and Natural Resources Administration Order No. 25, small fishermen living in an area using boats of not more than three tons are allowed within the 15-kilometer range from the shoreline, which is called municipal waters.

Sandoval said that the continued arrest of Malabon and Navotas fishermen could affect the supply of fish in Metro Manila.

Those arrested, he said, are required to raise P5,000 for bail or their homes would be confiscated.

Sandoval did not provide details of his claims.

Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco said the only reports of arrests that he had heard happened three months ago.

Munti hunts down dengue carriers

By Jocelyn R. Uy

MUNTINLUPA City is at war against mosquitoes.

Dubbing its operation Sudor Habitat Hunting, the City Health Office (CHO) has fielded inspectors to eliminate breeding grounds of the dengue-carrying mosquito, Belinda Bercilla, officer-in-charge of CHO Sanitation Division, told the Inquirer.

"Our staff brings in tips on the mosquito and schools for possible breeding grounds of these mosquitoes," said Bercilla.

Aedes (tegrpt) mosquitoes are the primary carrier of the virus that causes dengue fever. It is believed to feed early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

Since June, the city has adopted preventive fogging. Star decided to carry out a door-to-door blitz.

These mosquitoes lay eggs even in clear water in tin cans, old tires, flower vases and other water containers that are left exposed or uncovered.

Broken bottles, coconut husks and plant pots are also possible breeding grounds for the mosquitoes.

The CHO advised households to discard these items.

"To prevent the spread of dengue, mosquitoes should be stopped from losing eggs. And this could be done by making sure that neighborhoods are free of breeding grounds," Bercilla explained.

Fogging would be done after an area has been cleaned up, she added.

Aedes Habitat Monitoring showed that F. De Mesa Elementary School in Barangay Tunasan and Soldier's Elementary School had a significant number of breeding grounds.

Rare blood type binds Marikina group

By Ethan C. Tandoc Jr.

THE rare blood type is common to members of this group in Marikina City.

Called Bombay by experts, the Bombay Bagbars, the newly launched group is composed of residents with the rare blood type AB.

The establishment of the group was spearheaded by city Vice Mayor Marcelo Andres, whose three children all have the rare blood type.

"Finding Bombay type AB is very hard. I understand the problem. Should anyone need a donor, it will take time to find one," he said in a phone interview.

His office has been sponsoring blood typing activities in schools and communities in the city to find residents with the rare blood type.

Patients and donors

The city blood bank also maintains a list of patients or donors who have been found to have blood type AB.

According to city blood program coordinator Carlo de Guzman, only about 30 out of 100 people carry the blood type AB.

And during blood transfusions, carriers of this blood type are advised to accept blood only of the same type to avoid complications, she added.

But now that the group has been launched, finding Type AB blood donors will no longer be difficult.

"Should anyone need a donor, all we have to do is contact members of the group," De Guzman said.

The group now has about 150 members, Andres said.

To look for more members, the group will be holding a new round of blood typing in the city. Those who will be found to be of blood type AB will be encouraged to join the group.

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METRO

Major's gun used in Santiago slay

By Marjoun C. Ortiz and Tarra V. Quismundo

THE .38 used by the primary suspect in shooting to death television director Louie Santiago outside an upscale bar in Makati City last month apparently belongs to a Marine major according to officials of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), the owner was arrested in the incident.

Still the police Reynaldo Pleyto said they would issue a subpoena to Marine Major Robert Alvarez and ask him to explain how his gun landed in the hands of suspect Oliver Jamero's friends Antonio Cruz, Jr. Angeles. Pleyto said they would also ask Angeles to go to the PNP to find out his involvement in the case, according to Jamero's affidavit. Angeles handed him the gun which he said during a fight at the Resorts World parking lot.

Jamero, a 32-year-old businessman engaged in the buying and selling of cars, was apprehended by NBI agents in Makati on Oct. last Sunday. "We have established with Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief Gen. Efren Abu regarding Alvarez's appearance," Pleyto said in a press conference at the NBI yesterday.

Makati chief of police Senior Supt. Jacinto Gutierrez said they notified Gen. Eduardo who the registered owner of the Glock .357 firearm used in the V-Bar shooting incident last June 8.

Jamero presented in his sworn statement that he was in the bar with Angeles, Rogelio Pedregosa and Luis Castro when he saw a friend and another woman fighting outside around 4 a.m.

Jamero's attempt to pacify the women, however, led to a brawl. The suspect said he remembered crawling toward a nearby parked vehicle to escape the angry crowd. Angeles then handed him a gun, he added.

"Feeling totally helpless and with only survival on my mind, I got hold of the gun and without any malice, instinctively squeezed the trigger," Jamero said in his statement.

He added: "I had no intention of shooting or hurting anybody because my action was propelled by my instinct to survive."

SPO2 Mercyedel Bulanin, who was also in the fracas, however, said he saw Jamero pointing the gun at him and his partners. "I got so scared because when I saw Jamero point the gun at me," said Bulanin, who had gone to the area immediately following a report on the incident.

Jamero insisted in his statement that he handed Angeles' firearm to the bar with Angeles, Rogelio Pedregosa and Luis Castro when he saw a friend and another woman fighting outside around 4 a.m.

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Singapore-bound

An NBI source said Jamero and Angeles fled to the latter's house at the posh Multinational subdivision in Alabang where they left behind the Toyota Hi-Lux. The couple then went to Jamero's home in Mandaluyong City to get some clothes before heading to the airport, where they took a plane for Singapore on the same day.

The source added that Angeles left for the United States after a few days in Singapore Jamero, on the other hand, returned to the Philippines after a week.

Jamero, apparently sent surrender feelers after allegedly receiving death threats.

The NBI has filed charges of homicide and direct assault upon an agent or person in authority, with attempted homicide against Jamero before the Department of Justice (DOJ), according to the NBI National Capital Region chief, Jaime Edmund Ampig.

National Capital Region Police Office Director Vidal Querol said they would be filing obstruction of justice charges against Angeles' brother Estrella for refusing to cooperate with the police when asked about her daughter's whereabouts.

Meanwhile, Sherry Ildefon, the Makati City second assistant prosecutor handling the criminal complaint against Jamero, said yesterday that he could not act on the pending case until there is a press release from the operation.

Two cases

"What was filed before this office was a case about the shooting before the alleged shooter was arrested," said Ildefon.

On June 16, the Makati Police charged Jamero with

BUSINESS

John Paolo O. Marcelo
Assistant Copy Editor & Reviewer

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Consumer prices surged 7.6% in June

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE RISE of increase in prices of consumer goods and services slowed down to 7.6 percent in June, owing partly to the improved weather conditions that helped stabilize prices of food products, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

The inflation rate for June was a marked slowdown from 8.1 percent in the first three months of the year. It was, however, still way beyond the full-year target of 5 to 6 percent, which economic officials admitted was no longer reachable.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (Central Bank) said the latest monthly inflation figure of 7.6 percent was much better than its projection of an 8-percent rate for consumer prices in June.

"If [the rate was] good in June, therefore prices of food did not have much reason to post sharp increases," said Jesmin Aranas, director of Bangko's policy and planning staff. He added that the inflation rate in June said to the second half of the year was expected to be lower than the year-ago level because of a high base. Inflation started increasing the 6-percent mark in the second half of 2004.

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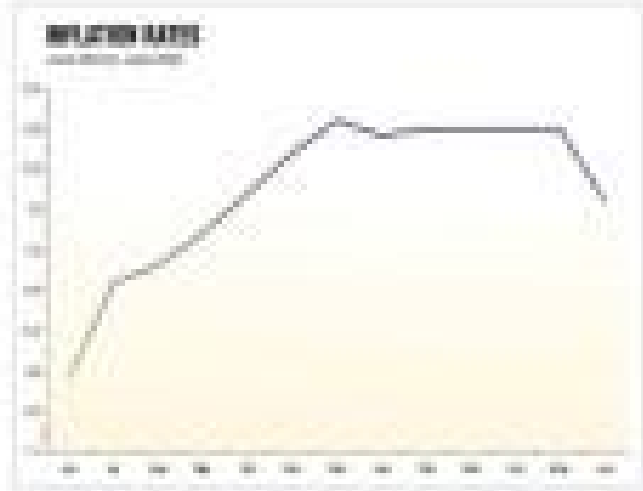


SLEX upgrade to start August

By Charissa E. Bautista

Malaysia's MTD Capital said it was ready to start the upgrade of the South Luzon Expressway next month and was just waiting for the blessings of Philippine National Construction Corp. to push through with the project.

Gan Kok Seong, the SLEX concessionaire's Malaysian chief, called on Chairman of MTD Manila Expressway Corp. Vee Gotianun to push through with the project.

Gan said that by Aug. 15, Malaysia's second biggest toll operator was prepared to start civil work on the SLEX.

The upgrade will involve the widening of the Alabang-to-Sta. Rosa portion to eight lanes. Sta. Rosa to Calamba is now a six-lane road and the Calamba-to-Sto. Tomas segment is four-lane.

"We are just waiting for the PNCC's final word," Daniel said in an interview. PNCC published its agreement with Hopewell Consortium that gave MTD Capital, as the new owner, opposite to the terms.

PNCC president Arthur Aquilar said the

₱56.245 TO $1

Peso slips to 6-mo. low

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday tottered to a six-month low of ₱56.245 against the dollar, hurt by the upturned among lower currencies, on renewed selling pressure and fuel over ongoing political uncertainties, but the severe suppression of the expanded value-added tax (VAT) implementation.

Pressured by the outlook of local stocks on Monday, the local currency hit an intra-day high of ₱56.00 before closing at its lowest level of ₱56.245, its weakest finish since Jan. 6 this year despite some intervention by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, currency traders said.

The volume of the spot foreign exchange market rose to $350.95 million from $300.5 million on Monday.

Although the peso was still a bit above its historic low of ₱56.45-$1, traders said the recent move in the market had caused the fall seven after the high-strained to see the implementation of the VAT reform law, a key component of the government's fiscal consolidation agenda.

Traders said the passage of VAT was a key

CONTINUED ON

CURRENCIES

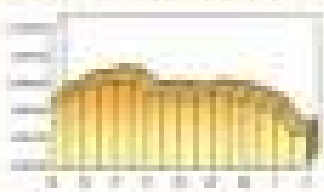
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱56.188 vs. $1
As of 5 p.m., July 5, 2005
113.33 vs. 1
As of 5 p.m., July 5, 2005
GOLD: $431.40-432.90
per ounce in Hong Kong, July 6, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Stocks end flat

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(Market news report, Page B6)

WHAT'S INSIDE

Customs misses 6-mo. goal

Hormel expanding RP unit

By Bunnel W. Dumlao

PROCESSED meat firm Hormel Foods International Corp. is planning to expand its production capacity to the country as part of efforts to widen the export market for its barbeq, corned beef and canned meat brands.

Daniel L. Leegates, Hormel Foods vice president for Asia-Pacific, said in an interview that Pure Foods Hormel Co.—the Hormel joint venture with San Miguel Corp.—was considering increasing the capacity of its factory in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Pure Foods Hormel's $40-million plant, which started operations in October 2004, can produce 100 metric tons of both products daily.

This was on top of a 20-year old plant in Mandaue City, which can turn out 80 MT of both products daily.

Leegates said the latest decision for both facilities to operate double shifts per day is primarily to cope with the growing demand for the products.

"The Philippines has the highest per capita consumption of both products in the world, mainly because they eat it in any meal of the day."

He said that if total loading demand keeps growing at such rates, the Cavite factory was ready to keep up with the demand as equipment could be easily added to jack up capacity to 240MT a day.

Also, the company has already started exporting both products and other meat products to countries hosting sizeable Filipino communities, such as the Middle East.

"Exports are still a small part of our business here but we are intending to ship a lot of exports from the Philippines to rest of our production hubs in the region," Leegates said.

"In fact, if it is the biggest producer of Spam in Asia."

Erich Hermino, HFPC country manager for the Philippines, said the firm was developing its food service business since this was growing at almost 5% percent yearly.

Tolentino said the company was expecting food service to make up almost half of its total business in the future.

Tolentino added that Pure Foods Hormel even tied up with fast food chains that offered Spam as one of their breakfast meals.

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UPLINK

NTC proposes to keep half of fund collection

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission said it would ask Congress to authorize to retain half of its annual Fund collection so it could buy new equipment that would help improve its monitoring of the telecom and broadcasting services.

The NTC, which collected P1.5 billion in fees and charges last year, is to receive an annual budget of only about P140 million.

As of end-June, the NTC had already raised about P1 billion in the form of fees and charges collected from telecom, broadcast and cable companies.

PDCI Chair Ronald Ilida said the budget allocation from Congress was not enough to finance the acquisition of new equipment, which were crucial in its regulatory functions.

"We need to retain at least 50 percent of our collections since our annual budget of P140 million is not enough to carry out some of the projects we intend to implement," said Ilida.

The NTC is planning to purchase equipment that will allow it to monitor the performance standards of the telecom firms. Ilida said these equipment were estimated to cost between $6,000 and $1,000 per piece.

"We know the carriers already have their own monitoring equipment but as the regulating agency, we must conduct our own inspections. How can we do that if we do not have our own equipment," Ilida asked.

Capital raised via IPOs hit $662M in first 5 months

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CAPITAL raised through initial public offerings and secondary offerings at the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) soared 3,838 percent to P662.8 million in the first five months of the year, from only P16.9 million in the comparable last year, the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) said in the June 2005 issue of its monthly publication called "Focus."

"This is a major rebound from the full year results of $11.5 million in 2004 and $37.8 million in 2003. This makes our exchange at par with emerging markets," WFE president and chief executive officer Hervé Lin, said in a statement.

The amount of capital generated by the Philippine stock market was, however, lower than the $995.2 million raised by Bursa Malaysia in the same period.

It was higher than the Stock Exchange of Thailand's $529.4 million and Jakarta Stock Exchange's $223.3 million.

Lin explained that the bulk of the investment flow came from the IPOs of Manila water utility Manila Water Company (MWC) and the banking company of Chill power (Metro Pa, SM Investment Corp., which were listed in March.

MWC raised $66.48 million while SM generated $424.11 million through their respective IPOs, accounting for 83 percent of the total investments in the stock market.

Furthermore, the WFE reported that the performance of the PSE's 30-stock composite index continued to rally and remained resilient for the period, climbing 27.7 percent as of end-May 2005 to 1,928.4 from 1,511.4 a year ago.

SLEX upgrade . . .

From page B1

state agency would decide within the week as to whether to accept the Malaysian firm as joint venture partner in the SLEX project.

"Our preference is for the private sector to handle infrastructure projects and that the government participates only to compare it," Aguila said.

MTD Manila Expressway Corp. is the new name of Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc. The Malaysian firm is working on the re-naming of the company as neither Hopewell nor Crown is part of the consortium.

Control of Hopewell Crown has changed hands three times since the original owner, Hong Kong's Hopewell Holdings Ltd. of Gordon Wu, signed an agreement in 1999 to rehabilitate and operate the SLEX.

Other people's money

A TEAM of ex-PCIBankers who have gone through the financial wrecks of Equitable Bank since the latter's acquisition of PCIBank in 1999 came up with a startling finding. Not only was the 13-percent "treasury" shares now lodged with subsidiary EIC investments acquired through bank funds, but Equitable's acquisition of PCIBank had been financed all along by bank, and not shareholders', money.

If the numbers and the accounting behind scenes, then the Go family has executed what Sun Bowl nominee Andrew Bonamer III failed to do when he was still the rising runaway shareholder at Sun Mypol Corp.—borrow corporate funds to gain monetary control of Sun Mypol through the dividend-depleted deal.

As if to compound its woes, Equitable PCIBank has been ordered by the Bangko Sentral to formally explain why in May the bank paid dividends to EIC investments for the 13-percent block he made to reflect current market value.

Equitable PCIBank is scheduled to hold a stockholders' meeting on July 19, and both the board hierarchy former and the Government Service Insurance System, which owns 35 percent of the merged banks, claim the Go, at 25 percent, are not to appropriate for themselves the 13-percent "treasury" block to bolster their treasury hold.

For the Go family, what they should watch out for a robust Equitable PCIBank chief Gerge Go comes out and symbolizes the findings of the PCIBankers-Forensic team.

If the grapevine is correct, that scenario will happen sooner than later.

In-And-Ride

AFTER nearly two months wait, Bureau of Customs Commissioner Andrew Bongtan was told by would finally get by today the license plates for the new Audi A4 Quattro he had acquired from duty-free dutied-unclaimed dealer, Auto Pronto.

(Despite the Customs' firing duty-free scandal, the latter claims it continues to be the exclusive Audi distributor dealer for virtue of offering [illegible] until today.)

Customs misses 6-mo. goal

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE BUREAU of Customs said yesterday it has collected P60.085 billion in revenues during the first half the year.

The collection was 8 percent short of the P72.917-billion target for the period, but 12 percent more than the P60.366 billion collected during the same period last year.

The BOC, in the government's second-biggest revenue contributor, next to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Bureau of Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina attributed the increase in the BOC's revenue collection to revenue-enhanced anti-smuggling measures.

According to Lina, Asst. Commissioner Jesus Del Rosario's Task Force Ronin, which is in charge of anti-smuggling operations, has been instrumental in the seizure of smuggled goods worth P4 billion since January.

Lina also cited the technological advancements in the agency, as well as streamlining of processes as the personnel of duties.

The BOC's efforts to curb revenue losses, however, fell short of the target for the period, due partly to the slight decrease in imports during the first quarter of the year.

Latest data from the National Statistics Office showed that imports for the January to April period were down some percent to $10.95 billion from $11.206 billion during the same period a year ago.

The government is counting on the BOC and the BIR to meet their collection targets, to close the budget gap.

But despite the below-target performance, the Department of Finance has projected that the budget position of the national government exceeded the target of P68.5 billion for the first half.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said that the deficit for the first half was restricted to be about P20 billion or less than the target, and that it could have even recorded a surplus in June.

The national government's fiscal position for the first half would be announced within the week, Cruz said.

The projected surplus in June would be the second for the year. Last April, the government posted a P3.3-billion surplus.

With the positive fiscal performance, the DOF believes the government would end the year with a deficit below the P136-billion ceiling.

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

exclusive Audi distributor dealer for virtue of offering [illegible]

In late-Frontrunner spokesperson, morning in a Monday from here, curiously blamed Malaysia for the delay, saying the business man had wanted a particular number ending for his license plates.

Also contrary to Customs' report, the plates would not have been released from Customs had the proper import duties, as stated supra, been Frontrunner settled.

Meanwhile, Audi broker Jose Bertini assured that Audi has not released the local sale the new Audi A6 3.2 FSI being sold by the in Frontrunner because of non-compatibility with the local gasoline, which could give rise to what the former euphemistically referred to as "maintenance issues."

According to Bertini, Auto 19 manufacturer imported the A6 3.2 FSI engine model from a Taiwan dealer, and not from Audi itself.

Merry-go-round

✦ BALCER turned pauses Guinness' dancer Ricardo Salvador, it's going to be Cher, Ricardo, and her table, Rubicon Poje. Lance Silverio, for control of the family's insurance business, Continental Guarantee Assurance Corp., and about P40 million in investment placements.

The following negotiations, however, do not cover "dipping Bird Helpers into the pension and offshore" of Continental, despite her being a director of the company.

✦ A TEMPOrama Pilli. Cat Ben Dolleo is busy in her stuff for its hotel in Qatar.

Heard through the grapevine

PLDT and Smart are holding advanced talks, which would likely result in former chair Antonio Cojuangco Jr. folding on his stake preferring Digitel satellite venture into PLDT's planned satellite TV business.

PLDT executive Napoleon Nazareno is satellite TV over yet, while Cojuangco wants to only.

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Transco fast-tracks ₱5.7B worth of projects in Mindanao

By Abigail L. Hu

THE NATIONAL Transmission Corp. is accelerating the completion of ₱5.7 billion worth of transmission lines and substations in Mindanao to prevent a power crisis in the island.

Transco reported in mid-June since then Only said the state firm was working double hard to complete 23 transmission line and substation projects to meet the growing demand for power in Mindanao.

Transco said in a statement yesterday that Transco is installing two more substation capacity additions projects worth P400 million in Iligan City, Zamboanga del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Surigao and Davao.

The projects are expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Over the last four years, Mindanao's peak demand has been growing at an average of 5.8 percent a year.

Dependable power delivery services, on the other hand, has increased almost 9.8 percent in the 2003 to 2004 period.

Transco, through its Mindanao Transmission Improvement Project (Mintip), aims to serve the increasing demand over the next few years.

Projects under Mintip include the installation of some upstream-based substation equipment in the Aurora substation in Zamboanga del Sur.

Transco's substation in September, this will enable an array of activities and procedures in the substation, resulting in, among others, faster response during times of emergency.

Transco has also finished pre-construction activities on 1.6 transmission line and substation additions and capacity expansion projects.

Among these are the 230-kilovolt Kidapawan (city) -Sirawai-Kolambugan line, the 138-km Iligan-Maramag line and the 2944-km Mindanao-Bukidnon line, all rated 230 kilovolts (kV).

Once completed, these new lines will provide additional capacity to the existing highway to deliver power coming from the Agus-Pulangi hydroelectric facility in northern Mindanao.

Construction of new 138-kV line on the other hand, will connect the 2X50 mega-watt Santos-Tacurong line and the 46-km Sangali-Pitogo line in Zamboanga City.

LPI seeks license to sell plans

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PRE-NEED firm Pacific Plans Inc. is asking the Insurance and Exchange Commission for a license that will allow 15,000 agents of its subsidiary, Lifetime Plans Inc., to continue selling insurance plans, PPI president Francis Lavina told the Inquirer.

PPI stopped selling open-ended or traditional plans since 1992 but it has continued paying obligations to planholders. Early this year, the SEC revoked the certificate of incorporation of PPI's subsidiary, Lifetime, for alleged failure to meet capital requirements, which should either its ability to continue operating. In effect, both pre-need companies have no authority to sell subscriber plans.

"Lifetime is no longer alive (the SEC revoked its certificate). They applied over and over for reconsideration as well. Now, we are seeking a license that will allow Lifetime agents to continue selling," Garcia said.

Lavina also said that should the SEC rule PPI to formally apply for a new license, PPI would be willing to comply with the requirements.

Insurance said the SEC was studying the options in resolving the issue of PPI's and Lifetime's pre-need and one of those options was to ask PPI to apply for a new license.

In a Senate hearing last week, Lifetime officials said they met with with companies that had no dealing business.

The SEC earlier rejected a petition by Lifetime seeking the renewal of a ruling that would reduce the company's license to operate. The SEC said it denied Lifetime's motion for reconsideration due to lack of merit.

Lifetime spokesperson Samuel V. Torres said in a separate statement that the pre-need firm would appeal the ruling.

LPI will also work closely with PPI in restructuring 13 legal and administrative issues that will ensure that no Lifetime employee or other agents will be displaced.

"While we did not expect the SEC to reverse itself, we believe we have strong legal grounds against the revocation order," Torres said.

Torres also assured beneficiaries that they would continue receiving their benefits and asked the rest of Lifetime's 400,000 policyholders to continue paying their premiums.

In a first-page resolution , the SEC said it saw no valid reason to reverse its previous ruling revoking the certificate of registration of Lifetime.

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HIGH RISK PREMIUM

Gov't rejects bids for T-bonds

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE GOVERNMENT rejected all bids for the two-year treasury bonds yesterday as the market continued to ask for high returns on government securities amid doubts whether it could still achieve its fiscal targets with the VAT law suspended.

Rod dela Rama of Treasury accepted the bids for the two-year bonds, the rate could have gone up by 75 basis points to PA25 percent compared with its rate in February. In the two-year debt instrument's auction last May the bids were also all rejected because the Treasury found it too high to be meaningful by banks.

Tenders for the two-year government securities reached P5.19 billion, or higher than the government's debt offering of P1 billion.

But National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the bids were mostly discretionary and therefore did not reflect the appetite of the market. He noted that trading for the two-year debt instrument was lackluster in the secondary market.

"We will give the market one week to digest all these developments like suspending existing order issued against the VAT law). Anyway by the end of the week, they will know the government's June fiscal performance," Cruz said in a briefing after yesterday's auction.

The implementation of the Expanded Value Added Tax law of 2005, considered the administration's key measures to solve the country's fiscal problem, was suspended by the Supreme Court Friday after a petition filed by opposition lawmakers. The law sought to expand the coverage of the tax to include more items like oil and electricity, and would raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent next year.

The measure was the government's centerpiece administration's fiscal reform plans into disarray and President Macapagal-Arroyo hatched alternatives of "re-engineering."

Mr. Arroyo has vowed to finish her second term in 2010 but is facing the worst crisis of her four-year presidency as some of the powerful businessmen, business groups and Catholic Church leaders who make up her support base begin to distance themselves.

A Supreme Court ruling late on Friday, freezing an expanded sales tax pending hearings on an opposition petition, struck at the very heart of the President's plans to cut debt and poverty.

The peso and stocks, already sensitive to perceptions of rising political risk, were hit on Monday by the court ruling, with the main stock index tumbling more than 4 percent.

The stock market closed flat yesterday and the peso edged lower to 56.31 against the dollar. Traders said it was only saved from further losses by sustained dollar-buying interventions by the central bank.

"The sell-off in stocks was severe yesterday but a bounce is unlikely until we see some relief from the court," said Jojo Gonzales, managing director of Philippine Equity Partners.

"It's unclear if the court will heed the urgent plea of the government to lift the freeze."

The petition to the Supreme Court by opposition lawmakers and party-list leader Abakada Ako-centrist-minority of just of the sales tax package but there was speculation Mr Arroyo may have leaned on the court to defuse anger over rising prices.

The court dismissed yesterday the government's petition to lift the freeze and said it may hear oral arguments on July 13, earlier than it he previously planned July 26. Reuters

Political woes continue to pressure markets

FINANCIAL markets stayed under pressure yesterday after a court ruling threw the government's fiscal reform plans into disarray and President Macapagal-Arroyo battled allegations of wrongdoing.

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Consumer

Arroyo said, however, that there was an economy that the inflation would be kept at its June level for the rest of the year because of the growing threats of high oil prices. He said the inflation projection of the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), of which Neda is a member, was at 7.9 percent for the full year.

The economic and high oil prices were expected in the remaining months of the year, as China would continue having high demand for oil. China's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, grew by 9.5 percent last year and by 9.4 percent in the first quarter of the current year.

"Besides, things are still unresolved in Iraq. We also have the summer season in the United States, which will increase chances of Middle-going out and therefore increasing their demand for fuel. All these things are seen to put pressure on oil prices," Arroyo said in an interview.

The Neda said in a statement that the increase in consumer prices was partly attributed to higher cost of educational services, as schools raised tuition, and to the increase in the prices of selected school supplies that came along with the resumption of classes.

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DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. disclosed that its senior vice president, Jun Florencio, disposed of 3,000 shares on July 4, at P1,325 per share.

***

FAIRLINE Comair Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 25, 9 a.m., at Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati Ave., Makati City. Stockholders of record as of June 25 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

***

CHINA Banking Corp. disclosed that EVP Jose Leslie Jamir disposed of 40 shares on June 29.

***

ROCOM Philippines Inc. elected Atsushi Kato to replace Tomoyuki Kokusai, who resigned as director on July 1.

***

METRO Alliance Holdings and Equities Corp. moved its annual stockholders' meeting from July 29 to Sept. 9. It will be held at 3 p.m., at No. 24 Flr. CRL Bldg., Ortigas Trade, 4741 Pasay de Roxas, Makati City. The record date was also moved from June 29 to July 31. Cascaded by Cyrill L. Bonalaves, PDI Research

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Being one of them for a day helped me learn to appreciate shoe salesgirls more

It's shoe time

By Mark Pinions
24/7 Correspondent

MY FRIEND burst out laughing when I told her I would be working as a shoe salesgirl for a day. I bet you wouldn't even last 30 minutes, she said. I gave her my best haughty, I-am-above-this-mundane glare, trying (and failing) to convince myself that I was going to be okay.

I thought of all the poor salesgirls I had insulted/totally harassed every time I would enter a shoe store, look around, ask for my size, try on a few pairs, ask if they have other colors, and end up not buying anything (and of course, leaving behind a huge mess of shoes unfocused. Well, I was in for some karma.

I didn't want to back out, though, and somewhere inside me, I kept hoping the experience would be a positive one. So on a seemingly normal Friday morning, I dragged myself over to U.S. & Int. in Megamall, just in time for the shop's opening. I strained outside the swanky shoe store, beaming, after what felt like an hour, my curiosity finally got the better of me. And I'm sure glad it did.

Singapore brand

U.S. & Int. ("stressing unique and reliable quality shoes) is a Singapore-based brand catering mainly to females 20-40 years old. Styled after big brands Steve Wren, Guy and Zoro, its products are surprisingly pocket-friendly (P1,500-P2,700 for shoes, P2,000-P4,000 for bags). I immediately fell in love with a pair of glitz pink ballerina pumps, but that's another story.

As I entered the store, the salesgirl on duty greeted me pleasantly. I gave her a big smile in return, assuring that she was wearing almost exactly the same outfit I had on—a polo-green polo and dark slacks. It was amusing because I didn't even know what the store's prescribed uniform looked like!

I introduced myself to the girl, who told me her name was Mina and invited me to sit down while waiting for her fog the order and numbering manager. "Ma'am, nerse po ay ngay," she added, grinning. "Ay nga eh," I replied, immediately at ease.

My job was fairly simple. Greet the customers when they walk in, chat our many fashion advice. Khanto kung like "Ma'am, hagay po sa mga jean," or "Ma'am, 'yong pa-ang kasal style nerbit"), go to the stock room if they ask for their sizes, offer assistance when they try something on, lead them to the cashier if they do decide to buy, and bid them goodbye cheerfully when they step out—regardless of whether they purchased something or was friendly toward you.

I was half-expecting several celeb sightings (Jay and Ate Charo and Caroline Barreto were on their list of famous customers), but I encountered my share of non-showbiz personalities instead. While most of the customers were the typical pretty, power-dressed career women, there were some who broke the norm. There was this sweet guy

IT'S SHOE (1)

WORKING on the computer

THEA/THOR with the LUCKY Shoe staff

The job: Shoe salesgirl

The good:

- The client's psychiatrist is relieving.
- Talk is weekend. They really made our feet comfortable.
- You get to be in the presence of shoes, shoes and shoes all the time.

The bad:

- Customer: I scribble your to-scrubbs.
- Things dreams for a bit since during morning mornings.
- You get to be in the presence of shoes, shoes and shoes all the time.

FEELING the shoes.

It's shoe time

From page C1

who wanted to buy shoes for his girlfriend but wasn't sure what her size was (I count my lucky pearl stars, though). There was their new-inducting old couple who held hands while they looked around). Then there was the lady who wore music-stylist the now three times, left, and came back after 10 minutes, apparently the store broke, because finally declaring, "Hindi ako ko make-desisyon."

Few smiles

Overall, the job wasn't as overwhelmingly difficult as I thought it would be, probably because shoe stores during peaceful weekdays are far less chaotic than the shoe sections of department stores during back-to-school, Christmas, or 50-percent-off sale seasons.

I found out a lot of things about Filipino customers, but what struck me most was that they seldom smiled back at salesladies, or answered a greeting, or said "thank you" before leaving. They nearly even bothered to say "No, thanks, I'm just looking."

Your sour salespeople can get quite annoying when they hover around you and act like all shoppers are potential kidnappers, but most customers tend to forget the rules of common courtesy as well. I don't mean that to sound like a snobby overstated, "It-only-an-exclusive-touch-other-the-world-would-be-a-much-better-place" line, but you can't deny the fact that an could all use a good dose of respect for the people who work their butts off just to make shopping a pleasant experience for us.

So, yeah, I guess I'll have to give in to a good old cliché ending. Being a shoe salesgirl for a day helped me learn to appreciate shoe salesgirls more. And yes, I hated way more than 30 minutes. Ha.

U.R.S. & Inc. products are also available at Rustan's Shangri-la and Isle & Co. at Eastwood and Power Plant Mall.

E-mail the author at mayaramos@yahoo.com

HELPING customers pick out the right pair of shoes

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Karen T. Torres from Angeles, Pampanga, Maria Cristina T. Gimenez from Las Piñas City, Benjamin Adolfo from Makati City, Catherine Arevalo from Pasig City and Alan Grail from Bacolod City.

These finalists will battle it out in a mini-shopping contest this weekend.

The grand prize winner from the Philippines will compete with the experienced shoppers from 17 other countries for the Shopper of the Year 2005 title.

Who among the five chosen ones will emerge victorious and bring to compete? Will team Philippines finally take home the much-coveted title and fabulous, trophy-for prize this year?

The international competition dimmed "Discover the Shopping Fun in Hong Kong" will be on July 19 at Lan Kwai Fong in Hong Kong. Contestants from Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, UK, USA, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mainland China, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand will be given a Shopping Info Pack and HK$3,000 in shopping money. Each team will be required to purchase one item from four categories—Fashion and Beauty, Jewellery & Watches, Consumer Electronics and Chinese Traditions—within a specific time frame. Contestants will present their purchases to judges on July 20. Prizes will be awarded on that same day.

To find out more about the 2005 Hong Kong shopping festival, log on to www.DiscoverHongKong.com